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THE

MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISEMENT.

THE success of the first series of the *Table Talk*, in the Library of Choice Reading, has induced the publishers to undertake a complete collection of all the popular writings of WILLIAM HAZLITT. Two additional volumes have already appeared, the *Lectures on the Writers of the Age of Elizabeth*, and on the *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays*. These will be immediately followed by the *Lectures on the English Poets*, and on the *Comic Writers*. A volume on *Art*, the *Travels in Italy*, the *Spirit of the Age*, the *Round Table*, *Miscellaneous Essays and Reviews*, *Passages from the Life of Bonaparte*, the *Characteristics*, etc., will appear in rapid succession.

The present numbers of the *Table Talk* embrace, with those already published, nearly the entire contents of the London editions of *Table Talk* and *Plain Speaker*, with extensive additions from the *Literary Remains*. Many of HAZLITT'S papers are yet uncollected from the magazines and reviews. Whatever remains will be carefully sought for and included, with the *Critical Essays on his Life* by Talfourd and Bulwer, in a final volume.

TABLE TALK.

ESSAY I.

On the feeling of immortality in youth.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth which makes us amends for everything. To be young is to be as one of the Immortals. One half of time indeed is spent—the other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures, for there is no line drawn and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own—

"The vast, unbounded prospect lies before us."

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, a dream, a fiction, with which we have nothing to do. Others may have undergone, or may still undergo them—we "bear a charmed life," which laughs to scorn all such idle fancies. As, in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager sight forward,

"Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,"

and see no end to prospect after prospect, new objects presenting themselves as we advance, so in the outset of life we see no end to our desires nor to the opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag, and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of life and motion, and ceaseless progress, and feel in ourselves all the vigor and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present signs how we shall be left behind in the race, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the

simplicity and, as it were, abstractedness of our feelings in youth that (so to speak) identifies us with nature and (our experience being weak and our passion strong) makes us fancy ourselves immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with being, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our desires, and hushed into fancied security by the roar of the universe around us—we quaff the cup of life with eager thirst without draining it, and joy and hope seem ever mantling to the brim—objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that there is no room for the thoughts of death. We are too much dazzled by the gorgeousness and novelty of the bright waking dream about us to discern the dim shadow lingering for us in the distance. Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts that way even if we could. We are too much absorbed in present objects and pursuits. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere "the wine of life is drunk," we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favorite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, that passion loosens its hold upon futurity, and that we begin to contemplate as in a glass darkly the possibility of parting with it for good. Till then, the example of others has no effect upon us. Casualties we avoid; the slow approaches of age we play at *hide and seek* with. Like the foolish fat scullion in Sterne who hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is, "So am not I!" The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, only seems to strengthen and enhance our sense of the possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves or be mowed down by the scythe of Time like grass: these are but metaphors to the unreflecting buoyant ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy withering around us, that we give up the flattering delusions that before led us on, and that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us hypothetically to the silence of the grave.

Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most mysterious. No wonder when it is first granted to us, that our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight, should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are borrowed from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we unconsciously transfer its durability as well as its splendor to ourselves. So newly found we cannot think of parting with it yet, or at least put off that consideration *sine die*. Like a rustic at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thought of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only by ourselves, and confound our knowledge with the objects of it. We and nature are therefore one. Otherwise the illusion, the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," to which we are invited, is a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the last act is ended, and the lights are about to be extinguished. But the fairy face of nature still shines on: shall we be called away before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe, and then, as if we were a burden to her to support, lets us fall down again. Yet what brave sublunary things does not this pageant present, like a ball or *fête* of the universe!

To see the golden sun, the azure sky, the outstretched ocean; to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures; to look down yawning precipices or over distant sunny vales; to see the world spread out under one's feet on a map; to bring the stars near; to view the smallest insects through a microscope; to read history, and consider the revolutions of empire and the successions of generations; to hear of the glory of Tyre, of Sidon, of Babylon, and of Susa, and to say all these were before me and are now nothing; to say I exist in such a point of time, and in such a point of space; to be a spectator and a part of its every moving scene; to witness the change of season, of spring and autumn, of winter and summer; to feel hot and cold, pleasure and pain, beauty and deformity, right and wrong; to be sensible to the accidents of nature; to consider the mighty world of eye and ear; to listen to the stock-dove's notes amid the forest

deep; to journey over moor and mountain: to hear the midnight sainted choir; to visit lighted halls, or the cathedral's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked; to study the works of art, and refine the sense of beauty to agony; to worship fame, and to dream of immortality; to look upon the Vatican, and to read Shakspeare; to gather up the wisdom of the ancients, and to pry into the future; to listen to the trump of war, the shout of victory; to question history as to the movements of the human heart; to seek for truth; to plead the cause of humanity; to overlook the world as if time and nature poured their treasures at our feet,—to be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be nothing—to have it all snatched from us as by a juggler's trick, or a phantasmagoria! There is something in this transition from all to nothing that shocks us and damps the enthusiasm of youth new flushed with hope and pleasure, and we cast the comfortless thought as far from us as we can. In the first enjoyment of the estate of life we discard the fear of debts and duns, and never think of the final payment of our great debt to nature. Art we know is long, life we flatter ourselves should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties and delays we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. The fame of the great names we look up to is immortal; and shall not we who contemplate it imbibe a portion of etherial fire, the *divinæ particula auræ*, which nothing can extinguish? A wrinkle in Rembrandt or in nature takes whole days to resolve itself into its component parts, its softenings and its sharpnesses; we refine upon our perfections, and unfold the intricacies of nature. What a prospect for the future! What a task have we not begun! And shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not count our time thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away; we do not flag or grow tired, but gain new vigor at our endless task. Shall Time then grudge us to finish what we have begun, and have formed a compact with nature to do? Why not fill up the blank that is left us in this manner? I have looked for hours at Rembrandt without being conscious of the flight of time, but with every new wonder and delight, have thought that not only my own but another existence I could pass in the same manner. This rarefied, re-

fixed existence seemed to have no end, nor stint, nor principle of decay in it. The print would remain long after I who looked on it had become the prey of worms. The thing seems in itself out of all reason: health, strength, appetite are opposed to the idea of death, and we are not ready to credit it till we have found our illusions vanished, and our hopes grown cold. Objects in youth from novelty, &c., are stamped upon the brain with such force and integrity that one thinks nothing can remove or obliterate them. They are rivetted there, and appear to us as an element of our nature. It must be a mere violence that destroys them, not a natural decay. In the very strength of this persuasion we seem to enjoy an age by anticipation. We melt down years into a single moment of intense sympathy, and by anticipating the fruits defy the ravages of time. If then a single moment of our lives is worth years, shall we set any limits to its total value and extent? Again, does it not happen that so secure do we think ourselves of an indefinite period of existence, that at times when left to ourselves, and impatient of novelty, we feel annoyed at what seems to us the slow and creeping progress of time, and argue that if it always moves at this tedious snail's pace it will never come to an end? How ready are we to sacrifice any space of time which separates us from a favorite object, little thinking that before long we shall find it move too fast!

For my own part I started in life with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas! to see the end of it. But I did not foresee this result. My sun rose with the first dawn of liberty, and I did not think how soon both must set. The new impulse to ardor given to men's minds imparted a congenial warmth and glow to mine; we were strong to run a race together, and I little dreamed that long before mine was set, the sun of liberty would turn to blood, or set once more in the night of despotism. Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt myself young, for with that my hopes fell.

I have since turned my thoughts to gathering up some of the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form to which I might occasionally revert. The future was barred to my progress, and I turned for consolation and encouragement to the past. It is thus that while we find our personal

and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and vicarious one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeathe our names, at least, to posterity. As long as we can make our cherished thoughts and nearest interests live in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage. We still occupy the breasts of others, and exert an influence and power over them, and it is only our bodies that are reduced to dust and powder. Our favorite speculations still find encouragement, and we make as great a figure in the eye of the world or perhaps a greater than in our life-time. The demands of our self-love are thus satisfied, and these are the most imperious and unremitting. Besides, if by our intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by our virtues and faith we may attain an interest in another, and a higher state of being, and thus flourish in *immortal youth*, and may thus be recipients at the same time of men and angels.

> "E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
> E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires."

As we grow old, our sense of the value of time becomes vivid. Nothing else indeed seems of any consequence. We can never cease wondering that that which has ever been should cease to be. We find many things remain the same: why then should there be change in us? This adds a convulsive grasp of whatever is, a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth tasting existence and every object in it, all is flat and vapid,—a whited sepulchre, fair without but full of ravening and uncleanness within. The world is a witch that puts us off with false shows and appearances. The simplicity of youth, the confiding expectation, the boundless raptures, are gone: we only think of getting out of it as well as we can, and without any great mischance or annoyance. The flush of illusion, even the complacent retrospect of past joys and hopes, is over: if we can slip out of life without indignity, can escape with little bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the calm and respectable composure of *still-life* before we return to absolute nothingness,

it is as much as we can expect. We do not die wholly at our deaths: we have mouldered away gradually long before. Faculty after faculty, interest after interest, attachment after attachment disappear: we are torn from ourselves while living, year after year sees us no longer the same, and death only consigns the last fragment of what we were to the grave. That we should wear out by slow stages, and dwindle at last into nothing, is not wonderful, when even in our prime our strongest impressions leave little traces but for the moment, and we are the creatures of petty circumstances. How little effect is made on us in our best days by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sensations we have gone through! Think only of the feelings we experience in reading a fine romance (one of Sir Walter's, for instance); what beauty, what sublimity, what interest, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose the feelings you then experience would last for ever, or subdue the mind to their own harmony and tone: while we are reading it seems as if nothing could ever after put us out of our way, or trouble us:—the first splash of mud that we get on entering the street, the first twopence we are cheated out of, the feeling vanishes clean out of our minds, and we become the prey of petty and annoying circumstance. The mind soars to the lofty: it is at home in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. And yet we wonder that age should be feeble and querulous,—that the freshness of youth should fade away. Both worlds would hardly satisfy the extravagance of our desires and our presumption.

ESSAY II.

On the Want of Money.

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—for where there is a downright absence of the common necessaries of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labor, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the good luck to encounter. This gap, this unwelcome interval, constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this Essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort, for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet

the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and the butterman have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source, the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled banknote in your breeches-pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer, has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources, which form a legal tender in the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket, that one could part with? nothing belonging to one's self, or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old-

clothes man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like a premeditated insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great-coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do anything!—The late Mr. Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs. Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighborhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot: the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of "The School for Scandal," to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day.*

* Taylor, of the Opera House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds; and if he stopped to speak with him, it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth*. He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed; and yet nobody can tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post-chaises and four; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course accumulate to a dreadful amount. "Such gain the cap of him who makes them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed." Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs. Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn's to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs. Barber (I think it was) made answer that

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear up against his calamity better than

the time was short, but that ready money was a charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed, she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr. Sheridan, who sent out a Mr. Grimm (one of his jackalls) to say that he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs. Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound banknote in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident; and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for further instructions; who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs. B. said she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room, at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good humor, and paid her the amount of her bill in ten, five, and one pound notes. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend," said Sheridan; "take it home, and write it upon *parchment!*" He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was showing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St. James's street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in a quarter of an hour afterwards, they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr. Sheridan was not yet up, and shown into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, "Are those doors all shut, John?" and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old city friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favorite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again: but when they came to the door they were told by the check-takers there was none for them, for that Mr. Sheridan had been in the meantime, and had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it

the former, which really "blights the tender blossom and promise of the day." With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger, and moralize upon temperance. One has time to turn one's self, and look about one—to "screw one's courage to the sticking-place," to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison, or a brace of pheasants, from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

"As kind as kings upon their coronation day;"

was with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, "What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?" When he got to Covent Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-House, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—"Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of: but that" (laying his hand upon his heart), "but that, thank God, I have never felt!" I have been told that these were nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr. Matthews the player, who was on the spot at the time,—a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was, "I am Mr Wilberforce!"—is well known, and shows that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.* Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need. How many expedients are there in this great city, time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for temperance, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring, having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without family (for what business has a man without money with one?—*See English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*)—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, "of formal cut," to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of "Gil Blas," containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII., over an oyster-*paté*, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury*, better than I did

* In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey, with which you commence the day, is emphatically called "taking your *morning*."

at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author) in the contrivance of old Caleb, in "The Bride of Lammermuir," for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor, but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion, a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton :—

> "And ever against *eating* cares,
> Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!"

Defoe, in his "Life of Colonel Jack," gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a three-penny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—"and every time," he says, "we called for bread or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, 'coming, gentlemen, coming;' and this delighted me more than all the rest." It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, "the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!" Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labor, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond's admiration of the old man at the banking house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold, as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager, anxious visits day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his

riches, in the "City Madam," and in the extraordinary raptures of the "Spanish Rogue," in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr. Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which, to our present more refined and tamer apprehensions, sound like blasphemy.* In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god!

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a Hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery ticket by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties;—or to find a letter lying for you at a country post office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and to be obliged to return for it the next day.

The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which, in some measure, indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalisation is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gen-

* Shylock's lamentation over the loss of "his daughter and his ducats," is another case in point.

tlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting: as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it.

There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel b ggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piece-meal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds and Funds for decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but the players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled "by tl eir so potent art," to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock dinner or a re?l one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the sa ne. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shows the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragement;

and want and infirmities press upon them at once. "We KNOW what we are," as Ophelia says, "but we know not what we shall be." A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—"within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us." I heard, not long ago, of a poor man who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of human insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonizing threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, "MY DEAR MISS NANCY!"

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully, yet the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt but by incurring pity. The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you

have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard run, as to be induced to request a repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honor and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cold contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If anything can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you had a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and hopeless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's "Rake's Progress," where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it: "Your play has been read, and won't do."* To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. We have heard it remarked, that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, "Ah! he was a fine fellow once!"

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater

* It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favors.

inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shows us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendor that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondrical, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the back-ground, or play an under part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris; the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Bonaparte was yet beaten, "with wine of attic taste," when wit, beauty, friendship

presided at the board! But no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled, can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a raceball, or to give their servants new liveries. I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one, and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library: and the Duchess of —— has immortalized herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that "if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the 'Elegy in a Country Church-yard.'"

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of it, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted, or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in one's own country; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you wish; or to go out to the

East or West-Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief; or to be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favorite with the public for a while, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a gaol, by the fickleness of taste and some new favorite—to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth, and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman something more. Echard's book 'On the Contempt of the Clergy' is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroical aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to

respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is neither worth a doit, nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humor of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them, walking out in the summer's-evenings, at Somers' Town, in their long great coats, their beards covered with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestige of the *ancien regime*, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendor of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—"pure in the last recesses of the mind"—unmixed with, or alloyed by "baser matter!"—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr. Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalizes all situations, and by which the absence of anything only gives us a more intense and intimate

perception of the reality ; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward with ease to delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavory morsel that is to save it from perishing ; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls ; in short, that "we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus"—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having anything to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time ; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors ; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home : and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a single bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage ; whereas, with a little management, and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep anything you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must :* if you let them have anything to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt ; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend ? And how is this to be helped, when the manner

of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubbles burst at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highwayman of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connection with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in the want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, scarcely allowing themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat, are in dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram:

"Here lies Father Clarges,
Who died to save charges."

ESSAY III.

On Sitting for One's Picture.

THERE is a pleasure in sitting for one's picture, which many persons are not aware of. People are coy on this subject at first, coquet with it, and pretend not to like it, as is the case with other venial indulgences, but they soon get over their scruples, and become resigned to their fate. There is a conscious vanity in it; and vanity is the *aurum potabile* in all our pleasures, the true *elixir* of human life. The sitter at first affects an air of indifference, throws himself into a slovenly or awkward position, like a clown when he goes a courting for the first time, but gradually recovers himself, attempts an attitude, and calls up his best looks, the moment he receives intimation that there is something about him that will do for a picture. The beggar in the street is proud to have his picture painted, and would almost sit for nothing: the finest lady in the land is as fond of sitting to a favorite artist as of seating herself before her looking-glass; and the more so, as the glass in this case is sensible of her charms, and does all it can to fix or heighten them. Kings lay aside their crowns to sit for their portraits, and poets their laurels to sit for their busts! I am sure, my father had as little vanity, and as little love for the art as most persons: yet when he had sat to me a few times (now some twenty years ago), he grew evidently uneasy when it was a fine day, that is, when the sun shone into the room, so that we could not paint; and when it became cloudy, began to bustle about, and ask me if I was not getting ready. Poor old room! Does the sun still shine into thee, or does Hope fling its colors round thy walls, gaudier than the rainbow? No, never, while thy oak-panels endure, will they inclose such fine movements of the brain as passed through mine, when the fresh hues of nature gleamed from the canvas, and my heart silently breathed the names of Rembrandt and Correggio! Between my father's love

of sitting and mine of painting, we hit upon a tolerable likeness at last; but the picture is cracked and gone; and *Mcgilp* (that bane of the English school) has destroyed as fine an old Nonconformist head as one could hope to see in these degenerate times.

The fact is, that the having one's picture painted is like the creation of another self; and that is an idea, of the repetition or reduplication of which no man is ever tired, to the thousandth reflection. It has been said that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves. This seems to be a bond of connexion (a delicate one it is!) between the painter and the sitter—they are always thinking and talking of the same thing, the picture, in which their self-love finds an equal counterpart. There is always something to be done or altered, that touches that sensitive cord—this feature was not exactly hit off, something is wanting to the nose or to the eyebrows, it may perhaps be as well to leave out this mark or that blemish, if it were possible to recal an expression that was remarked a short time before, it would be an indescribable advantage to the picture—a squint or a pimple on the face handsomely avoided may be a link of attachment ever after. He is no mean friend who conceals from ourselves, or only gently indicates, our obvious defects to the world. The sitter, by his repeated, minute, *fidgetty*, inquiries about himself may be supposed to take an indirect and laudable method of arriving at self-knowledge; and the artist, in self-defence, is obliged to cultivate a scrupulous tenderness towards the feelings of his sitter, lest he should appear in the character of a spy upon him. I do not conceive there is a stronger call upon secret gratitude than the having made a favorable likeness of any one; nor a surer ground of jealousy and dislike than the having failed in the attempt. A satire or a lampoon in writing is bad enough; but here we look doubly foolish, for we are ourselves parties to the plot, and have been at considerable pains to give evidence against ourselves. I have never had a plaster cast taken of myself: in truth, I rather shrink from the experiment; for I know I should be very much mortified if it did not turn out well, and should never forgive the unfortunate artist who had lent his assistance to prove that I looked like a blockhead!

The late Mr. Opie used to remark that the most sensible people made the best sitters; and I incline to his opinion, especially as I myself am an excellent sitter. Indeed, it seems to me a piece of mere impertinence not to sit as still as one can in these circumstances. I put the best face I can upon the matter, as well out of respect to the artist as to myself. I appear on my trial in the court of physiognomy, and am as anxious to make good a certain idea I have of myself, as if I were playing a part on a stage. I have no notion how people go to sleep, who are sitting for their pictures. It is an evident sign of want of thought and of internal resources. There are some individuals, all whose ideas are in their hands and feet—make them sit still, and you put a stop to the machine altogether. The volatile spirit of quicksilver in them turns to a *caput mortuum*. Children are particularly sensible of this constraint from their thoughtlessness and liveliness. It is the next thing with them to wearing the fool's-cap at school: yet they are proud of having their pictures taken, ask when they are to sit again, and are mightily pleased when they are done. Charles the First's children seem to have been good sitters, and the great dog sits like a Lord Chancellor.

The second time a person sits, and the view of the features is determined, the head seems fastened in an imaginary *vice*, and he can hardly tell what to make of his situation. He is continually overstepping the bounds of duty, and is tied down to certain lines and limits chalked out upon the canvas, to him "invisible or dimly seen" on the throne where he is exalted. The painter has now a difficult task to manage—to throw in his gentle admonitions. "A little more this way, sir," or "You bend rather too forward, madam,"—and ought to have a delicate white hand, that he may venture to adjust a straggling lock of hair, or by giving a slight turn to the head, co-operate in the practical attainment of a position. These are the ticklish and tiresome places of the work, before much progress is made, where the sitter grows peevish and abstracted, and the painter more anxious and particular than he was the day before. Now is the time to fling in a few adroit compliments, or to introduce general topics of conversation. The artist ought to be a well-informed and agreeable man—able to expatiate on his art, and abounding in lively and characteristic anec-

notes. Yet he ought not to talk too much, or to grow too animated; or the picture is apt to stand still, and the sitter to be aware of it. Accordingly, the best talkers in the profession have not always been the most successful portrait-painters. For this purpose it is desirable to bring a friend, who may relieve guard, or fill up the pauses of conversation, occasioned by the necessary attention of the painter to his business, and by the involuntary reveries of the sitter on what his own likeness will bring forth; or a book, a newspaper, or a portfolio of prints may serve to amuse the time. When the sitter's face begins to flag, the artist may then properly start a fresh topic of discourse, and while his attention is fixed on the graces called out by the varying interest of the subject, and the model anticipates, pleased and smiling, their being transferred every moment to the canvas, nothing is wanting to improve and carry to its height the amicable understanding and mutual satisfaction and good-will subsisting between these two persons, so happily occupied with each other!

Sir Joshua must have had a fine time of it with his sitters. Lords, ladies, generals, authors, opera-singers, musicians, the learned and the polite, besieged his doors, and found an unfailing welcome. What a rustling of silk! What a fluttering of flounces and brocades! What a cloud of powder and perfumes! What a flow of periwigs! What an exchange of civilities and of titles! What a recognition of old friendships, and an introduction of new acquaintance and sitters! It must, I think, be allowed that this is the only mode in which genius can form a legitimate union with wealth and fashion. There is a secret and sufficient tie in interest and vanity. Abstract topics of wit or learning do not furnish a connecting link: but the painter, the sculptor, come in close contact with the persons of the Great. The lady of quality, the courtier, and the artist, meet and shake hands on this common ground; the latter exercises a sort of natural jurisdiction and dictatorial power over the pretensions of the first to external beauty and accomplishment, which produces a mild sense and tone of equality; and the opulent sitter pays the taker of flattering likenesses handsomely for his trouble, which does not lessen the sympathy between them. There is even a satisfaction in paying down a high price for a picture—it seems

as if one's head was worth something!—During the first sitting, Sir Joshua did little but chat with the new candidate for the fame of portraiture, try an attitude, or remark an expression. His object was to gain time, by not being in haste to commit himself, until he was master of the subject before him. No one ever dropped in but the friends and acquaintance of the sitter—it was a rule with Sir Joshua that from the moment the latter entered, he was at home—the room belonged to him—but what secret whisperings would there be among these, what confidential, inaudible communications! It must be a refreshing moment, when the cake and wine had been handed round, and the artist began again. He, as it were, by this act of hospitality assumed a new character, and acquired a double claim to confidence and respect. In the mean time, the sitter would perhaps glance his eye round the room, and see a Titian or a Vandyke hanging in one corner, with a transient feeling of scepticism whether he should make such a picture. How the ladies of quality and fashion must bless themselves from being made to look like Dr. Johnson or Goldsmith! How proud the first of these would be, how happy the last, to fill the same arm-chair where the Bunburys and the Hornecks had sat! How superior the painter would feel to them all! By "happy alchemy of mind," he brought out all their good qualities and reconciled their defects, gave an air of studious ease to his learned friends, or lighted up the face of folly and fashion with intelligence and graceful smiles. Those portraits, however, that were most admired at the time, do not retain their pre-eminence now: the thought remains upon the brow, while the color has faded from the cheek, or the dress grown obsolete; and after all, Sir Joshua's best pictures are those of his worst sitters—*his Children*. They suited best with his unfinished style; and are like the infancy of the art itself, happy, bold, and careless. Sir Joshua formed the circle of his private friends from the *élite* of his sitters; and Vandyke was, it appears, on the same footing with his. When any of those noble or distinguished persons whom he has immortalised with his pencil, were sitting to him, he used to ask them to dinner, and afterwards it was their custom to return to the picture again, so that it is said that many of his finest portraits were done in this manner, ere the colors

were yet dry, in the course of a single day. Oh! ephemeral works to last for ever!

Vandyke married a daughter of Earl Cowper, of whom there is a very beautiful picture. She was the Œnone, and he his own Paris. A painter of the name of Astley married a Lady ———, who sat to him for her picture. He was a wretched hand, but a fine person of a man, and a great coxcomb; and on his strutting up and down before the portrait when it was done with a prodigious air of satisfaction, she observed, "If he was so pleased with the copy, he might have the original." This Astley was a person of magnificent habits and a sumptuous taste in living; and is the same of whom the anecdote is recorded, that when some English students walking out near Rome were compelled by the heat to strip off their coats, Astley displayed a waistcoat with a huge waterfall streaming down the back of it, which was a piece of one of his own canvases that he had converted to this purpose. Sir Joshua fell in love with one of his fair sitters, a young and beautiful girl, who ran out one day in a great panic and confusion, hid her face in her companion's lap who was reading in an outer room, and said, "Sir Joshua had made her an offer!" This circumstance perhaps deserves mentioning the more, because there is a general idea that Sir Joshua Reynolds was a confirmed old bachelor. Goldsmith conceived a fruitless attachment to the same person, and addressed some passionate letters to her. Alas! it is the fate of genius to admire and to celebrate beauty, not to enjoy it! It is a fate, perhaps not without its compensations—

> "Had Petrarch gained his Laura for a wife,
> Would he have written Sonnets all his life?"

This distinguished beauty is still living, and handsomer than Sir Joshua's picture of her when a girl; and inveighs against the freedom of Lord Byron's pen with all the charming prudery of the last age.*

* Sir Joshua may be thought to have studied the composition of his female portraits very coolly. There is a picture of his remaining of a Mrs. Symmons, who appears to have been a delicate beauty, pale, with a very little color in her cheeks: but then to set off this want of complexion, she is

The relation between the portrait-painter and his amiable sitters is one of established custom: but it is also one of metaphysical nicety, and is a running *double entendre*. The fixing an inquisitive gaze on beauty, the heightening a momentary grace, the dwelling on the heaven of an eye, the losing one's-self in the dimple of a chin, is a dangerous employment. The painter may chance to slide into the lover—the lover can hardly turn painter. The eye indeed grows critical, the hand is busy: but are the senses unmoved? We are employed to transfer living charms to an inanimate surface; but they may sink into the heart by the way, and the nerveless hand be unable to carry its luscious burthen any further. St. Preux wonders at the rash mortal who had dared to trace the features of his Julia; and accuses him of insensibility without reason. Perhaps he too had an enthusiasm and pleasures of his own! Mr. Burke, in his *Sublime and Beautiful*, has left a description of what he terms the most beautiful object in nature, the neck of a lovely and innocent female, which is written very much as if he had himself formerly painted this object, and sacrificed at this formidable shrine. There is no doubt that the perception of beauty becomes more exquisite ("till the sense aches at it") by being studied and refined upon as an object of art—it is at the same time fortunately neutralised by this means, or the painter would run mad. It is converted into an abstraction, an *ideal* thing, into something intermediate between nature and art, hovering between a living substance and a senseless shadow. The health and spirit that but now breathed from a speaking face, the next moment breathe with almost equal effect from a dull piece of canvas, and thus distract attention: the eye sparkles, the lips are moist there too; and if we can fancy the picture alive, the face in its turn fades into a picture, a mere object of sight. We take rapturous possession with one sense, the eye; but the artist's pencil acts as a non-conductor to the grosser desires. Besides, the sense of duty, of propriety interferes. It is not the question at issue: we have other work on our hands, and enough to do. Love is the product of ease and idleness: but

painted in a snow-white satin dress, there is a white marble pillar near her, a white cloud over her head, and by her side stands one white lily.

the painter has an anxious, feverish, never-ending task, to rival the beauty, to which he dare not aspire even in thought, or in a dream of bliss. Paints and brushes are not "amorous toys of light-winged Cupid;" a rising sigh evaporates in the aroma of some fine oil-color or varnish, a kindling blush is transfixed in a bed of vermilion on the palette. A blue vein meandering in a white wrist invites the hand to touch it: but it is better to proceed, and not spoil the picture. The ambiguity becomes more striking in painting from the naked figure. If the wonder occasioned by the object is greater, so is the despair of rivalling what we see. The sense of responsibility increases with the hope of creating an artificial splendor to match the real one. The display of unexpected charms foils our vanity, and mortifies passion. The painting *A Diana and Nymphs* is like plunging into a cold bath of desire: to make a statue of a *Venus* transforms the sculptor himself to stone. The snow on the lap of beauty freezes the soul. The heedless, unsuspecting licence of foreign manners gives the artist abroad an advantage over ours at home. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted only the head of Iphigene from a beautiful woman of quality: Canova had innocent girls to sit to him for his Graces. The Princess Borghese, whose symmetry of form was admirable, sat to him for a model, which he considered as his master-piece and the perfection of the female form; and when asked if she did not feel uncomfortable while it was taking, she replied with great indifference, "No: it was not cold!" I have but one other word to add on this part of the subject: if having to paint a delicate and modest female is a temptation to gallantry, on the other hand the sitting to a lady for one's picture is a still more trying situation, and amounts (almost of itself) to a declaration of love!

Landscape-painting is free from these tormenting dilemmas and embarrassments. It is as full of the feeling of pastoral simplicity and ease, as portrait-painting is of personal vanity and egotism. Away then with those incumbrances to the true liberty of thought—the sitter's chair, the bag-wig and sword, the drapery, the lay figure—and let us to some retired spot in the country, take out our portfolio, plant our easel, and begin. We are all at once shrouded from observation—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot!"

We enjoy the cool shade with solitude and silence; or hear the dashing waterfall,

"Or stock-dove plain amid the forest deep,
That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale."

It seems almost a shame to do anything, we are so well content without it; but the eye is restless, and we must have something to show when we get home. We set to work, and failure or success prompts us to go on. We take up the pencil, or lay it down again, as we please. We muse or paint, as objects strike our senses or our reflection. The perfect leisure we feel turns labor to a luxury. We try to imitate the grey color of a rock or of the bark of a tree: the breeze wafted from its broad foliage gives us fresh spirits to proceed, we dip our pencil in the sky, or ask the white clouds sailing over its bosom to sit for their pictures. We are in no hurry, and have the day before us. Or else, escaping from the close-embowered scene, we catch fading distances on airy downs, and seize on golden sunsets with the fleecy flocks glittering in the evening ray, after a shower of rain has fallen. Or from Norwood's ridgy height, survey the snake-like Thames, or its smoke-crowned capital;

"Think of its crimes, its cares, its pain,
Then shield us in the woods again."

No one thinks of disturbing a landscape-painter at his task: he seems a kind of magician, the privileged genius of the place. Wherever a Claude, a Wilson has introduced his own portrait in the foreground of a picture, we look at it with interest (however ill it may be done) feeling that it is the portrait of one who was quite happy at the time, and how glad we should be to change places with him.

Mr. Burke has brought in a striking episode in one of his later works in allusion to Sir Joshua's portrait of Lord Keppel, with those of some other friends, painted in their better days. The portrait is indeed a fine one, worthy of the artist and the critic,

and perhaps recalls Lord Keppel's memory oftener than any other circumstance at present does.* Portrait-painting is in truth a sort of cement of friendship, and a clue to history. That blockhead, Mr. C****r, of the Admiralty, the other day blundered upon some observations of mine relating to this subject, and made the House stare by asserting that portrait-painting was history or history portrait, as it happened; but went on to add, "That those gentlemen who had seen the ancient portraits lately exhibited in

* "No man lives too long, who lives to do with spirit, and suffer with resignation, what Providence pleases to command or inflict: but indeed they are sharp incommodities which beset old age. It was but the other day, that in putting in order some things which had been brought here on my taking leave of London for ever, I looked over a number of fine portraits most of them of persons now dead, but whose society, in my better days, made this a proud and happy place. Amongst these was the picture of Lord Keppel. It was painted by an artist worthy of the subject, the excellent friend of that excellent man from their earliest youth, and a common friend of us both, with whom we lived for many years without a moment of coldness, of peevishness, of jealousy, or of jar, to the day of our final separation.

"I ever looked on Lord Keppel as one of the greatest and best men of his age; and I loved and cultivated him accordingly. He was much in my heart, and I believe I was in his to the very last beat. It was after his trial at Portsmouth that he gave me this picture. With what zeal and anxious affection I attended him through that his agony of glory; what part, my son, in early flush and enthusiasm of his virtue and the pious passion with which he attached himself to all my connexions, with what prodigality we both squandered ourselves in courting almost every sort of enmity for his sake, I believe he felt, just as I should have felt, such friendship on such an occasion."—*Letters to a Noble Lord*, p. 29, *second edition, printed by T. Williams.*

I have given this passage entire here, because I wish to be informed, if I could, what is the construction of the last sentence of it. It has puzzled me all my life. One difficulty might be got over by making a pause after "I believe he felt," and leaving out the comma between "have felt" and "such friendship," That is, the meaning would be, "I believe he felt with what zeal and anxious affection," &c., "just as I should have felt such friendship on such an occasion." But then again, what is to become of the "what part, my son?" &c. With what does this connect, or to what verb is "my son" the nominative case, or by what verb is "what part" governed? I should really be glad, if, from any manuscript, printed copy, or marginal correction, this point could be cleared up, and so fine a passage resolved, by any possible ellipsis, into ordinary grammar.

Pall-mall, must have been satisfied that they were strictly *historical;*" which showed that he knew nothing at all of the matter, but merely talked by rote. There was nothing historical in the generality of those portraits, except that they were portraits of people mentioned in history—there was no more of the spirit of history in them (which is *passion* or *action*) than in their dresses. But this is the way in which that person, by his pettifogging habits and literal understanding, always mistakes a verbal truism for sense, and a misnomer for wit! I was going to observe, that I think the aiding the recollection of our family and friends in our absence may be a frequent and strong inducement in sitting for our pictures; but that I believe the love of posthumous fame, or of continuing our memories after we are dead, has very little to do with it. And one reason I should give for that opinion is this, that we are not naturally very prone to dwell with pleasure on anything that may happen in relation to us after we are dead, because we are not fond of thinking of death at all. We shrink equally from the prospect of that fatal event as from any speculation on its consequences. The surviving ourselves in our pictures is but a poor compensation—it is rather adding mockery to calamity. The perpetuating our names in the wide page of history or to a remote posterity is a vague calculation, that may take out the immediate sting of mortality—whereas we ourselves may hope to last (by a fortunate extension of the term of human life) almost as long as an ordinary portrait; and the wounds of lacerated friendship it heals must be still green, and our ashes scarcely cold. I think therefore that the looking forward to this mode of keeping alive the memory of what we were by lifeless hues and discolored features, is not among the most approved consolations of human life, or favorite dalliances of the imagination. Yet I own I should like some part of me, as the hair or even nails, to be preserved entire, or I should have no objection to lie like Whitfield in a state of petrifaction. This smacks of the bodily reality at least—acts like a deception to the spectator, and breaks the fall from this "warm, kneaded motion to a clod"—from that to nothing—even to the person himself. I suspect that the idea of posthumous fame, which has so unwelcome a condition annexed to it, loses its general relish as we advance in life, and that it is

only while we are young that we pamper our imaginations with this bait, with a sort of impunity. The reversion of immortality is then so distant, that we may talk of it without much fear of entering upon immediate possession: death is itself a fable—a sound that dies upon our lips; and the only certainty seems the only impossibility. Fame, at that romantic period, is the first thing in our mouths, and death the last in our thoughts.

ESSAY IV.

Whether genius is conscious of its powers?

No really great man ever thought himself so. The idea of greatness in the mind answers but ill to our knowledge—or to our ignorance of ourselves. What living prose-writer, for instance, would think of comparing himself with Burke? Yet would it not have been equal presumption or egotism in him to fancy himself equal to those who had gone before him—Bolingbroke or Johnson or Sir William Temple? Because his rank in letters is become a settled point with us, we conclude that it must have been quite as self-evident to him, and that he must have been perfectly conscious of his vast superiority to the rest of the world. Alas! not so. No man is truly himself, but in the idea which others entertain of him. The mind, as well as the eye, "sees not itself, but by reflection from some other thing." What parity can there be between the effect of habitual composition on the mind of the individual, and the surprise occasioned by first reading a fine passage in an admired author; between what we do with ease, and what we thought it next to impossible ever to be done; between the reverential awe we have for years encouraged, without seeing reason to alter it, for distinguished genius, and the slow, reluctant, unwelcome conviction that after infinite toil and repeated disappointments, and when it is too late and to little purpose, we have ourselves at length accomplished what we at first proposed; between the insignificance of our petty, personal pretensions, and the vastness and splendor which the atmosphere of imagination lends to an illustrious name? He who comes up to his own idea of greatness, must always have had a very low standard of it in his mind. "What a pity," said some one, "that Milton had not the pleasure of reading Paradise Lost!" He could not read it, as we do, with the weight of im-

pression that a hundred years of admiration have added to it—"a phœnix gazed by all"—with the sense of the number of editions it has passed through with still increasing reputation, with the tone of solidity, time-proof, which it has received from the breath of cold, envious maligners, with the sound which the voice of Fame has lent to every line of it! The writer of an ephemeral production may be as much dazzled with it as the public; it may sparkle in his own eyes for a moment, and be soon forgotten by every one else. But no one can anticipate the suffrages of posterity. Every man, in judging of himself, is his own contemporary. He may feel the gale of popularity, but he cannot tell how long it will last. His opinion of himself wants distance, wants time, wants numbers, to set it off and confirm it. He must be indifferent to his own merits, before he can feel a confidence in them. Besides, every one must be sensible of a thousand weaknesses and deficiencies in himself; whereas Genius only leaves behind it the monuments of its strength. A great name is an abstraction of some one excellence: but whoever fancies himself an abstraction of excellence, so far from being great, may be sure that he is a blockhead, equally ignorant of excellence or defect, of himself or others. Mr. Burke, besides being the author of the *Reflections*, and the *Letter to a Noble Lord*, had a wife and son; and had to think as much about them as we do about him. The imagination gains nothing by the minute details of personal knowledge.

On the other hand, it may be said that no man knows so well as the author of any performance what it has cost him, and the length of time and study devoted to it. This is one, among other reasons, why no man can pronounce an opinion upon himself. The happiness of the result bears no proportion to the difficulties overcome or the pains taken. *Materiam superabat opus*, is an old and fatal complaint. The definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously; and those who have produced immortal works, have done so without knowing how or why. The greatest power operates unseen, and executes its appointed task with as little ostentation as difficulty. Whatever is done best, is done from the natural bent and disposition of the mind. It is only where our incapacity begins, that we begin to feel the obstacles, and to set

an undue value on our triumph over them. Correggio, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, did what they did without premeditation or effort—their works came from their minds as a natural birth—if you had asked them why they adopted this or that style, they would have answered, *because they could not help it*, and because they knew of no other. So Shakspeare says:

> "Our poesy is as a gum which issues
> From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i' th' flint
> Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame
> Provokes itself; and, like the current, flies
> Each bound it chafes."

Shakspeare himself was an example of his own rule, and appears to have owed almost everything to chance, scarce anything to industry or design. His poetry flashes from him, like the lightning from the summer-cloud, or the stroke from the sun-flower. When we look at the admirable comic designs of Hogarth, they seem, from the unfinished state in which they are left, and from the freedom of the pencilling, to have cost him little trouble; whereas the *Sigismunda* is a very labored and comparatively feeble performance, and he accordingly set great store by it. He also thought highly of his portraits, and boasted that "he could paint equal to Vandyke, give him his time and let him choose his subject." This was the very reason why he could not. Vandyke's excellence consisted in this, that he could paint a fine portrait of any one at sight: let him take ever so much pains or choose ever so bad a subject, he could not help making something of it. His eye, his mind, his hand was cast in the mould of grace and delicacy. Milton again is understood to have preferred *Paradise Regained* to his other works. This, if so, was either because he himself was conscious of having failed in it; or because others thought he had. We are willing to think well of that which we know wants our favorable opinion, and to prop the ricketty bantling. Every step taken, *invitâ Minerva*, costs us something, and is set down to account; whereas we are borne on the full tide of genius and success into the very haven of our desires, almost imperceptibly. The strength of the impulse by which we are carried along prevents the sense of difficulty or resistance: the true

inspiration of the Muse is soft and balmy as the air we breathe ; and indeed, leaves us little to boast of, for the effect hardly seems to be our own.

There are two persons who always appear to me to have worked under this involuntary, silent impulse more than any others ; I mean Rembrandt and Correggio. It is not known that Correggio ever saw a picture of any great master. He lived and died obscurely in an obscure village. We have few of his works, but they are all perfect. What truth, what grace, what angelic sweetness are there ! Not one line or tone that is not divinely soft or exquisitely fair ; the painter's mind rejecting, by a natural process, all that is discordant, coarse, or unpleasing. The whole is an emanation of pure thought. The work grew under his hand as if of itself, and came out without a flaw, like the diamond from the rock. He knew not what he did ; and looked at each modest grace as it stole from the canvas with anxious delight and wonder. Ah ! gracious God ! not he alone ; how many more in all time have looked at their works with the same feelings, not knowing but they too may have done something divine, immortal, and finding in that sole doubt ample amends for pining solitude, for want, neglect, and an untimely fate. Oh ! for one hour of that uneasy rapture, when the mind first thinks it has struck out something that may last for ever ; when the germ of excellence bursts from nothing on the startled sight ! Take, take away the gaudy triumphs of the world, the long deathless shout of fame, and give back that heart-felt sigh with which the youthful enthusiast first weds immortality as his secret bride ! And thou too, Rembrandt ! who wert a man of genius, if ever painter was a man of genius, did this dream hang over you as you painted that strange picture of *Jacob's Ladder?* Did your eye strain over those gradual dusky clouds into futurity, or did those white-vested, beaked figures babble to you of fame as they approached ? Did you know what you were about, or did you not paint much as it happened ? Oh ! if you had thought once about yourself, or anything but the subject, it would have been all over with "the glory, the intuition, the amenity," the dream had fled, the spell had been broken. The hills would not have looked like those we see in sleep—that tatterdemalion figure of Jacob, thrown

on one side, would not have slept as if the breath was fairly taken out of his body. So much do Rembrandt's pictures savor of the soul and body of reality, that the thoughts seem identical with the objects—if there had been the least question what he should have done, or how he should do it, or how far he had succeeded, it would have spoiled everything. Lumps of light hung upon his pencil and fell upon his canvas like dew-drops: the shadowy veil was drawn over his backgrounds by the dull, obtuse finger of night, making darkness visible by still greater darkness that could only be felt!

Cervantes is another instance of a man of genius, whose work may be said to have sprung from his mind, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. Don Quixote and Sancho were a kind of twins; and the jests of the latter, as he says, fell from him like drops of rain when he least thought of it. Shakspeare's creations were more multiform, but equally natural and unstudied. Raphael and Milton seem partial exceptions to this rule. Their productions were of the *composite order;* and those of the latter sometimes even amount to centos. Accordingly, we find Milton quoted among those authors, who have left proofs of their entertaining a high opinion of themselves, and of cherishing a strong aspiration after fame. Some of Shakspeare's Sonnets have been also cited to the same purpose; but they seem rather to convey wayward and dissatisfied complaints of his untoward fortune than anything like a triumphant and confident reliance on his future renown. He appears to have stood more alone and to have thought less about himself than any living being. One reason for this difference may have been, that as a writer he was tolerably successful in his life-time, and no doubt produced his works with very great facility.

I hardly know whether to class Claude Lorraine as among those who succeeded most "through happiness or pains." It is certain that he imitated no one, and has had no successful imitator. The perfection of his landscapes seems to have been owing to an inherent quality of harmony, to an exquisite sense of delicacy in his mind. His monotony has been complained of, which is apparently produced from a preconceived idea in his mind; and not long ago I heard a person, not more distinguished for the sub-

tilty than the *naïveté* of his sarcasms, remark, "Oh! I never look at Claude: if one has seen one of his pictures, one has seen them all; they are every one alike: there is the same sky, the same climate, the same time of day, the same tree, and that tree is like a cabbage. To be sure, they say he did pretty well; but when a man is always doing one thing, he ought to do it pretty well." There is no occasion to write the name under this criticism, and the best answer to it is that it is true—his pictures are always the same, but we never wish them to be otherwise. Perfection is one thing. I confess I think that Claude knew this, and felt that his were the finest landscapes in the world—that ever had been, or would ever be.

I am not in the humor to pursue this argument any farther at present, but to write a digression. If the reader is not already apprised of it, he will please to take notice that I write this at Winterslow. My style there is apt to be redundant and excursive. At other times it may be cramped, dry, abrupt; but here it flows like a river, and overspreads its banks. I have not to seek for thoughts or hunt for images: they come of themselves, I inhale them with the breeze, and the silent groves are vocal with a thousand recollections—

> "And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Hang on each leaf, and cling to every bough."

Here I came fifteen years ago, a willing exile; and as I trod the lengthened greensward by the low wood-side, repeated the old line,

> "My mind to me a kingdom is!"

I found it so then, before, and since; and shall I faint, now that I have poured out the spirit of that mind to the world, and treated many subjects with truth, with freedom, and power, because I have been followed with one cry of abuse ever since *for not being a government-tool?* Here I returned a few years after to finish some works I had undertaken, doubtful of the event, but determined to do my best; and wrote that character of Millimant, which was once transcribed by fingers fairer than Aurora's, but

no notice was taken of it, because I was not a government-tool, and must be supposed devoid of taste and elegance by all who aspired to these qualities in their own persons. Here I sketched my account of that old honest Signior Orlando Friscobaldo, which with its fine, racy, acrid tone that old crab-apple, G*ff***d, would have relished or pretended to relish, had I been a government-tool! Here too I have written *Table-Talks* without number, and as yet without a falling off, till now that they are nearly done, or I should not make this boast. I could swear (were they not mine) the thoughts in many of them are founded as the rock, free as air, the tone like an Italian picture. What then? Had the style been like polished steel, as firm and as bright, it would have availed me nothing, for I am not a government-tool! I had endeavored to guide the taste of the English people to the best old English writers; but I had said that English Kings did not reign by right divine, and that his present majesty was descended from an elector of Hanover in a right line; and no loyal subject would after this look into Webster or Deckar because I had pointed them out. I had done something (more than any one except Schlegel) to vindicate the *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays* from the stigma of French criticism: but our Anti-Jacobin and Anti-Gallican writers soon found out that I had said and written that Frenchmen, Englishmen, men were not slaves by birth-right. This was enough to *damn* the work. Such has been the head and front of my offending. While my friend Leigh Hunt was writing the *Descent of Liberty*, and strewing the march of the Allied Sovereigns with flowers, I sat by the waters of Babylon and hung my harp upon the willows. I knew all along there was but one alternative—the cause of kings or of mankind. This I foresaw, this I feared; the world see it now, when it is too late. Therefore I lamented, and would take no comfort when the Mighty fell, because we, all men, fell with him, like lightning from heaven, to grovel in the grave of Liberty, in the style of Legitimacy! There is but one question in the hearts of monarchs, whether mankind are their property or not. There was but this one question in mine. I had made an abstract, metaphysical principle of this question. I was not the dupe of the voice of the charmers. By my hatred of tyrants I knew what their hatred of the free-

born spirit of man must be, of the semblance, of the very name of Liberty and Humanity. And while others bowed their heads to the image of the BEAST, I spit upon it and buffeted it, and made mouths at it, and pointed at it, and drew aside the veil that then half concealed it, but has been since thrown off, and named it by its right name; and it is not to be supposed that my having penetrated their mystery would go unrequited by those whose delight the idol, half-brute, half-demon, was, and who are ashamed to acknowledge the image and superscription as their own! Two half-friends of mine, who would not make a whole one between them, agreed the other day that the indiscriminate, incessant abuse of what I write was mere prejudice and party-spirit, and that what I do in periodicals and without a name does well, pays well, and is "cried out upon in the top of the compass." It is this indeed that has saved my shallow skiff from quite foundering on Tory spite and rancor; for when people have been reading and approving an article in a miscellaneous journal, it does not do to say when they discover the author afterwards (whatever might have been the case before) it is written by a blockhead; and even Mr. Jerdan recommends the volume of CHARACTERISTICS as an excellent little work, because it has no cabalistic name in the title-page, and swears "there is a first-rate article of forty pages in the last number of the Edinburgh from Jeffrey's own hand," though when he learns against his will that it is mine, he devotes three successive numbers of the LITERARY GAZETTE to abuse "that *strange* article in the last number of the Edinburgh Review." Others who had not this advantage have fallen a sacrifice to the obloquy attached to the suspicion of doubting, or of being acquainted with any one who is known to doubt, the divinity of kings. Poor Keats paid the forfeit of this *lèze majesté* with his health and life. What, though his Verses were like the breath of spring, and many of his thoughts like flowers—would this, with the circle of critics that beset a throne, lessen the crime of their having been praised in the Examiner? The lively and most agreeable Editor of that paper has in like manner been driven from his country and his friends who delighted in him, for no other reason than having written the story of Rimini, and asserted ten years ago,

"that the most accomplished prince in Europe was an Adonis of fifty!"

> "Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
> That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse!"

I look out of my window and see that a shower has just fallen: the fields look green after it, and a rosy cloud hangs over the brow of the hill; a lily expands its petals in the moisture, dressed in its lovely green and white; a shepherd-boy has just brought some pieces of turf with daisies and grass for his young mistress to make a bed for her sky-lark, not doomed to dip his wings in the dappled dawn—my cloudy thoughts drawn off, the storm of angry politics has blown over—Mr. Blackwood, I am yours—Mr. Croker, my service to you—Mr. T. Moore, I am alive and well—really, it is wonderful how little the worse I am for fifteen years' wear and tear, how I come upon my legs again on the ground of truth and nature, and "look abroad into universality," forgetting that there is any such person as myself in the world!

I have let this passage stand (however critical) because it may serve as a practical illustration to show what authors really think of themselves when put upon the defensive—(I confess, the subject has nothing to do with the title at the head of the Essay!)—and as a warning to those who may reckon upon their fair proportion of popularity as the reward of the exercise of an independent spirit and such talents as they possess. It sometimes seems at first sight as if the low scurrility and jargon of abuse by which it is attempted to overlay all common sense and decency by a tissue of lies and nicknames, everlastingly repeated and applied indiscriminately to all those who are not of the regular government-party, was peculiar to the present time, and the anomalous growth of modern criticism; but if we look back, we shall find the same system acted upon, as often as power, prejudice, dulness, and spite found their account in playing the game into one another's hands—in decrying popular efforts, and in giving currency to every species of base metal that had their own conventional stamp upon it. The names of Pope and Dryden were as-

sailed with daily and unsparing abuse—the epithet A. P. E. was levelled at the sacred head of the former—and if even men like these, having to deal with the consciousness of their own infirmities and the insolence and spurns of wanton enmity, must have found it hard to possess their souls in patience, any living writer amidst such contradictory evidence can scarcely expect to retain much calm, steady conviction of his own merits, or build himself a secure reversion in immortality.

However one may in a fit of spleen and impatience turn round and assert one's claims in the face of low-bred, hireling malice, I will here repeat what I set out with saying, that there never yet was a man of sense and proper spirit, who would not decline rather than court a comparison with any of those names, whose reputation he really emulates—who would not be sorry to suppose that any of the great heirs of memory had as many foibles as he knows himself to possess—and who would not shrink from including himself or being included by others in the same praise, that was offered to long-established and universally acknowledged merit, as a kind of profanation. Those who are ready to fancy themselves Raphaels and Homers are very inferior men indeed—they have not even an idea of the mighty names that "they take in vain." They are as deficient in pride as in modesty, and have not so much as served an apprenticeship to a true and honorable ambition. They mistake a momentary popularity for lasting renown, and a sanguine temperament for the inspirations of genius. The love of fame is too high and delicate a feeling in the mind to be mixed up with realities—it is a solitary abstraction, the secret sigh of the soul—

> "It is all one as we should love
> A bright particular star, and think to wed it."

A name "fast-anchored in the deep abyss of time" is like a star twinkling in the firmament, cold, silent, distant, but eternal and sublime; and our transmitting one to posterity is as if we should contemplate our translation to the skies. If we are not contented with this feeling on the subject, we shall never sit in Cassiopeia's chair, nor will our names, studding Ariadne's crown or streaming with Berenice's locks, ever make

"the face of heaven so bright
That birds shall sing, and think it were not night."

Those who are in love only with noise and show, instead of devoting themselves to a life of study, had better hire a booth at Bartlemy-Fair, or march at the head of a recruiting regiment with drums beating and colors flying!

It has been urged, that however little we may be disposed to indulge the reflection at other times or out of mere self-complacency, yet the mind cannot help being conscious of the effort required for any great work while it is about it, of

"The high endeavor and the glad success."

I grant that there is a sense of power in such cases, with the exception before stated; but then this very effort and state of excitement engrosses the mind at the time, and leaves it listless and exhausted afterwards. The energy we exert, or the high state of enjoyment we feel, puts us out of conceit with ourselves at other times: compared to what we are in the act of composition, we seem dull, common-place people, generally speaking; and what we have been able to perform is rather matter of wonder than of self-congratulation to us. The stimulus of writing is like the stimulus of intoxication, with which we can hardly sympathize in our sober moments, when we are no longer under the inspiration of the demon, or when the virtue is gone out of us. While we are engaged in any work, we are thinking of the subject, and cannot stop to admire ourselves; and when it is done, we look at it with comparative indifference. I will venture to say, that no one but a pedant ever read his own works regularly through. They are not *his*—they are become mere words, waste-paper, and have none of the glow, the creative enthusiasm, the vehemence, and natural spirit with which he wrote them. When we have once committed our thoughts to paper, written them fairly out, and seen that they are right in the printing, if we are in our right wits, we have done with them for ever. I sometimes try to read an article I have written in some magazine or review—(for when they are bound up in a volume, I dread the very sight of them)—but stop after a sentence or two

and never recur to the task. I know pretty well what I have to say on the subject, and do not want to go to school to myself. It is the worst instance of the *bis repetita crambe* in the world. I do not think that even painters have much delight in looking at their works after they are done. While they are in progress, there is a great degree of satisfaction in considering what has been done, or what is still to do—but this is hope, is reverie, and ceases with the completion of our efforts. I should not imagine Raphael or Correggio would have much pleasure in looking at their former works, though they might recollect the pleasure they had had in painting them; they might spy defects in them (for the idea of unattainable perfection still keeps pace with our actual approaches to it), and fancy that they were not worthy of immortality. The greatest portrait-painter the world ever saw used to write under his pictures, "*Titianus faciebat*," signifying that they were imperfect; and in his letter to Charles V. accompanying one of his most admired works, he only spoke of the time he had been about it. Annibal Caracci boasted that he could do like Titian and Correggio, and, like most boasters, was wrong. (*See his spirited Letter to his cousin Ludovico, on seeing the pictures at Parma.*)

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young. I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. As I grow older, it fades; or else, the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it. At present, I have neither time nor inclination for it: yet I should like to devote a year's entire leisure to a course of the English Novelists; and perhaps clap on that old sly knave, Sir Walter, to the end of the list. It is astonishing how I used formerly to relish the style of certain authors, at a time when I myself despaired of ever writing a single line. Probably this was the reason. It is in mental as in natural ascent—intellectual objects seem higher when we survey them from below, than when we look down from any given elevation above the common level. My three favorite writers about the time I speak of were Burke, Junius, and Rousseau. I was never weary of admiring and wondering at the felicities of the style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thought and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire

So I passed whole days, months, and I may add, years; and have only this to say now, that as my life began, so I could wish that it may end. The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out; I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common out-houses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a hundred years old—the one I entered opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of larkspur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscoted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-colored portrait of Charles II. hanging up over the tiled chimney-piece. I had "*Love for Love*" in my pocket, and began to read; coffee was brought in, in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, everything was excellent, and the flavor of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment til a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon, as *Miss Prue;* Bob Palmer, as *Tattle;* and Bannister, as honest *Ben*. This circumstance happened just five years ago, and it seems like yesterday. If I count my life so by lustres, it will soon glide away; yet I shall not have to repine, if, while it lasts, it is enriched with a few such recollections!

ESSAY V.

On Londoners and Country People.

I do not agree with Mr. *Blackwood* in his definition of the word *Cockney*. He means by it a person who has happened at any time to live in London, and who is not a Tory—I mean by it a person who has never lived out of London, and who has got all his ideas from it.

The true Cockney has never travelled beyond the purlieus of the Metropolis, either in the body or the spirit. Primrose-hill is the Ultima Thule of his most romantic desires; Greenwich Park stands him in stead of the Vales of Arcady. Time and space are lost to him. He is confined to one spot, and to the present moment. He sees everything near, superficial, little, in hasty succession. The world turns round, and his head with it, like a roundabout at a fair, till he becomes stunned and giddy with the motion. Figures glide by, as in a *camera obscura*. There is a glare, a perpetual hubbub, a noise, a crowd about him; he sees and hears a vast number of things, and knows nothing. He is pert, raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, contemptible. His senses keep him alive; and he knows, inquires, and cares for nothing farther. He meets the Lord Mayor's coach, and without ceremony treats himself to an imaginary ride in it. He notices the people going to court or to a city-feast, and is quite satisfied with the show. He takes the wall of a Lord, and fancies himself as good as he. He sees an infinite quantity of people pass along the street, and thinks there is no such thing as life or a knowledge of character to be found out of London. "Beyond Hyde Park all is a desert to him." He despises the country, because he is ignorant of it, and the town, because he is familiar with it. He is as well acquainted with St. Paul's as if he had built it, and talks of Westminster Abbey and Poets' Corner with great indifference.

The King, the House of Lords and Commons are his very good friends. He knows the members for Westminster or the City by sight, and bows to the Sheriffs or the Sheriffs' men. He is hand and glove with the Chairman of some Committee. He is, in short, a great man by proxy, and comes so often in contact with fine persons and things, that he rubs off a little of the gilding, and is surcharged with a sort of second-hand, vapid, tingling, troublesome self-importance. His personal vanity is thus continually flattered and perked up into ridiculous self-complacency, while his imagination is jaded and impaired by daily misuse. Everything is vulgarised in his mind. Nothing dwells long enough on it to produce an interest; nothing is contemplated sufficiently at a distance to excite curiosity or wonder. *Your true Co'kney is your only true leveller.* Let him be as low as he will, he fancies he is as good as anybody else. He has no respect for himself, and still less (if possible) for you. He cares little about his own advantages, if he can only make a jest at yours. Every feeling comes to him through a medium of levity and impertinence; nor does he like to have this habit of mind disturbed by being brought into collision with anything serious or respectable. He despairs (in such a crowd of competitors) of distinguishing himself, bu laughs heartily at the idea of being able to trip up the heels of other people's pretensions. A Cockney feels no gratitude. This is a first principle with him. He regards any obligation you confer upon him as a species of imposition, a ludicrous assumption of fancied superiority. He talks about everything, for he has heard something about it; and understanding nothing of the matter, concludes he has as good a right as you. He is a politician; for he has seen the Parliament House: he is a critic; because he knows the principal actors by sight—has a taste for music, because he belongs to a glee-club at the West End, and is gallant, in virtue of sometimes frequenting the lobbies at half-price. A mere Londoner, in fact, from the opportunities he has of knowing something of a number of objects (and those striking ones) fancies himself a sort of privileged person; remains satisfied with the assumption of merits, so much the more unquestionable as they are not his own; and from being dazzled with noise, show, and appearances, is less capable of giving a real opinion, or entering

into any subject than the meanest peasant. There are greater lawyers, orators, painters, philosophers, poets, players in London, than in any other part of the United Kingdom: he is a Londoner, and therefore it would be strange if he did not know more of law, eloquence, art, philosophy, poetry, acting, than any one without his local advantages, and who is merely from the country. This is a *non sequitur;* and it constantly appears so when put to the test.

A real Cockney is the poorest creature in the world, the most literal, the most mechanical, and yet he too lives in a world of romance—a fairy-land of his own. He is a citizen of London; and this abstraction leads his imagination the finest dance in the world. London is the first city in the habitable globe; and therefore he must be superior to every one who lives out of it. There are more people in London than anywhere else; and though a dwarf in stature, his person swells out and expands into *ideal* importance and borrowed magnitude. He resides in a garret or in a two pair of stairs' back room; yet he talks of the magnificence of London, and gives himself airs of consequence upon it, as if all the houses in Portman or in Grosvenor Square were his by right or in reversion. "He is owner of all he surveys." The Monument, the Tower of London, St. James's Palace, the Mansion House, White-Hall, are part and parcel of his being. Let us suppose him to be a lawyer's clerk at half-a-guinea a week: but he knows the Inns of Court, the Temple Gardens, and Gray's-Inn Passage—sees the lawyers in their wigs walking up and down Chancery Lane, and has advanced within half-a-dozen yards of the Chancellor's chair:—who can doubt that he understands (by implication) every point of the law (however intricate) better than the most expert country practitioner? He is a shopman, and nailed all day behind the counter: but he sees hundreds and thousands of gay, well-dressed people pass—an endless phantasmagoria—and enjoys their liberty and gaudy fluttering pride. He is a footman—but he rides behind beauty, through a crowd of carriages, and visits a thousand shops. Is he a tailor—that last infirmity of human nature? The stigma on his profession is lost in the elegance of the patterns he provides, and of the persons he adorns; and he is something very different

from a mere country botcher. Nay, the very scavenger and nightman thinks the dirt in the street has something precious in it, and his employment is solemn, silent, sacred, peculiar to London: A *barker* in Monmouth Street, a slop-seller in Radcliffe Highway, a tapster at a night-cellar, a beggar in St. Giles's, a drab in Fleet-Ditch, live in the eye of millions, and eke out a dreary, wretched, scanty, or loathsome existence from the gorgeous, busy, glowing scene around them. It is a common saying, among such persons, that "they had rather be hanged in London, than die a natural death out of it anywhere else"—Such is the force of habit and imagination. Even the eye of childhood is dazzled and delighted with the polished splendor of the jewellers' shops, the neatness of the turnery ware, the festoons of artificial flowers, the confectionery, the chemists' shops, the lamps, the horses, the carriages, the sedan-chairs: to this was formerly added a set of traditional associations—Whittington and his Cat, Guy Faux and the Gunpowder Treason, the Fire and the Plague of London, and the Heads of the Scotch Rebels that were stuck on Temple Bar in 1745. These have vanished, and in their stead the curious and romantic eye must be content to pore in Pennant for the site of old London-Wall, or to peruse the sentimental mile-stone that marks the distance to the place "where Hickes's Hall formerly stood!"

The *Cockney* lives in a go-cart of local prejudices and positive illusions; and when he is turned out of it, he hardly knows how to stand or move. He ventures through Hyde Park Corner, as a cat crosses a gutter. The trees pass by the coach very oddly. The country has a strange blank appearance. It is not lined with houses all the way, like London. He comes to places he never saw or heard of. He finds the world is bigger than he thought for. He might have dropped from the moon, for anything he knows of the matter. He is mightily disposed to laugh, but is half afraid of making some blunder. Between sheepishness and conceit, he is in a very ludicrous situation. He finds that the people walk on two legs, and wonders to hear them talk a dialect so different from his own. He perceives London fashions have got down into the country before him, and that some of the better sort are dressed as well as he is. A drove of pigs or cattle

stopping the road is a very troublesome interruption. A crow in a field, a magpie in a hedge, are to him very odd animals—he can't tell what to make of them, or how they live. He does not altogether like the accommodations at the inns—it is not what he has been used to in town. He begins to be communicative—says he was "born within the sound of Bow-bell," and attempts some jokes, at which nobody laughs. He asks the coachman a question, to which he receives no answer. All this is to him very unaccountable and unexpected. He arrives at his journey's end; and instead of being the great man he anticipated among his friends and country relations, finds that they are barely civil to him, or make a butt of him; have topics of their own which he is as completely ignorant of as they are indifferent to what he says, so that he is glad to get back to London again, where he meets with his favorite indulgences and associates, and fancies the whole world is occupied with what he hears and sees.

A Cockney loves a tea-garden in summer, as he loves the play or the Cider-Cellar in winter—where he sweetens the air with the fumes of tobacco, and makes it echo to the sound of his own voice. This kind of suburban retreat is a most agreeable relief to the close and confined air of a city life. The imagination, long pent up behind a counter or between brick walls, with noisome smells, and dingy objects, cannot bear at once to launch into the boundless expanse of the country, but "shorter excursions tries," coveting something between the two, and finding it at White-Conduit House, or the Rosemary Branch, or Bagnigge Wells. The landlady is seen at a bow-window in near perspective, with punch-bowls and lemons disposed orderly around—the lime-trees or poplars wave overhead to "catch the breezy air," through which, typical of the huge dense cloud that hangs over the metropolis, curls up the thin, blue, odoriferous vapor of Virginia or Oronooko—the benches are ranged in rows, the fields and hedge-rows spread out their verdure; Hampstead and Highgate are seen in the back-ground, and contain the imagination within gentle limits—here the holiday people are playing ball; here they are playing bowls—here they are quaffing ale, there sipping tea—here the loud wager is heard, there the political debate. In a sequestered nook a slender youth with purple face and droop

ing head, nodding over a glass of gin toddy, breathes in tender accents—"There's naught so sweet on earth as Love's young dream;" while "Rosy Ann" takes its turn, and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" is thundered forth in accents that might wake the dead. In another part sit carpers and critics, who dispute the score of the reckoning or the game, or cavil at the taste and execution of the *would-be* Brahams and Durusets. Of this latter class was Dr. Goodman, a man of other times—I mean of those of Smollet and Defoe—who was curious in opinion, obstinate in the wrong, great in little things, and inveterate in petty warfare. I vow he held me an argument once "an hour by St. Dunstan's clock," while I held an umbrella over his head (the friendly protection of which he was unwilling to quit to walk in the rain to Camberwell) to prove to me that Richard Pinch was neither a fives-player nor a pleasing singer. "Sir," said he, "I deny that Mr. Pinch plays the game. He is a cunning player, but not a good one. I grant his tricks, his little mean dirty ways, but he is not a manly antagonist. He has no hit, and no left-hand. How then can he set up for a superior player? And then as to his always striking the ball against the side wings at Copenhagen-house, Cavanagh, sir, used to say, 'The wall was made to hit at!' I have no patience with such pitiful shifts and advantages. They are an insult upon so fine and athletic a game! And as to his setting up for a singer, it's quite ridiculous. You know, Mr. H——, that to be a really excellent singer, a man must lay claim to one of two things; in the first place, sir, he must have a naturally fine ear for music, or secondly, an early education, exclusively devoted to that study. But no one ever suspected Mr. Pinch of refined sensibility; and his education, as we all know, has been a little at large. Then again, why should he of all other things be always singing 'Rosy Ann,' and 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' till one is sick of hearing them? It's preposterous, and I mean to tell him so. You know, I am sure, without my hinting it, that in the first of these admired songs, the sentiment is voluptuous and tender, and in the last patriotic. Now Pinch's romance never wandered from behind his counter, and his patriotism lies in his breeches' pocket. Sir, the utmost he should aspire to would be to play upon the Jews' harp!" This story of the Jews' harp tickled

some of Pinch's friends, who gave him various hints of it, which nearly drove him mad, till he discovered what it was; for though no jest or sarcasm ever had the least effect upon him, yet he cannot bear to think that there should be any joke of this kind about him, and he not in the secret: it makes against that *knowing* character which he so much affects. Pinch is in one respect a complete specimen of a *Cockney*. He never has anything to say, and yet is never at a loss for an answer. That is, his pertness keeps exact pace with his dulness. His friend, the Doctor, used to complain of this in good set terms.—"You can never make anything of Mr. Pinch," he would say. "Apply the most cutting remark to him, and his only answer is, '*The same to you, sir.*' If Shakspeare were to rise from the dead to confute him, I firmly believe it would be to no purpose. I assure you, I have found it so. I once thought indeed I had him at a disadvantage, but I was mistaken. You shall hear, sir. I had been reading the following sentiment in a modern play—'The Road to Ruin,' by the late Mr. Holcroft—'For how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' This was pat to the point (you know our friend is a hosier and haberdasher). I came full with it to keep an appointment I had with Pinch, began a game, quarrelled with him in the middle of it on purpose, went up stairs to dress, and as I was washing my hands in the slop-basin (watching my opportunity) turned coolly round and said, 'It's impossible there should be any sympathy between you and me, Mr. Pinch: for as the poet says, how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' 'Ay,' says he, 'does the poet say so? *then the same to you*, sir!' I was confounded, I gave up the attempt to conquer him in wit or argument. He would pose the Devil, sir, by his '*The same to you, sir.*'" We had another joke against Richard Pinch, to which the Doctor was not a party, which was, that being asked after the respectability of the *Hole in the Wall*, at the time that Randall took it, he answered quite unconsciously. "Oh! it's a very genteel place, I go there myself sometimes!" Dr. Goodman was descended by the mother's side from the poet Jago, was a private gentleman in town, and a medical dilettanti in the country, dividing his time equally between business and pleasure; had an inexhaustible flow of

words, and an imperturbable vanity, and held "stout notions on the metaphysical score." He maintained the free agency of man, with the spirit of a martyr and the gaiety of a man of wit and pleasure about town—told me he had a curious tract on that subject by A. C. (Anthony Collins) which he carefully locked up in his box, lest any one should see it but himself, to the detriment of the character and morals, and put it to me whether it was not hard, on the principles of *philosophical necessity*, for a man to come to be hanged? To which I replied, "I thought it hard on any terms!" A knavish *marker*, who had listened to the dispute, laughed at this retort, and seemed to assent to the truth of it, supposing it might one day be his own case.

Mr. Smith and the Brangtons, in "Evelina," are the finest possible examples of the spirit of *Cockneyism*. I once knew a linen-draper in the City, who owned to me he did not quite like this part of Miss Burney's novel. He said, "I myself lodge in a first floor, where there are young ladies in the house: they sometimes have company, and if I am out, they ask me to lend them the use of my apartment, which I readily do out of politeness, or if it is an agreeable party, I perhaps join them. All this is so like what passes in the novel, that I fancy myself a sort of second Mr. Smith, and am not quite easy at it!" This was mentioned to the fair Authoress, and she was delighted to find that her characters were so true, that an actual person fancied himself to be one of them. The resemblance, however, was only in the externals; and the real modesty of the individual stumbled on the likeness to a city coxcomb!

It is curious to what degree persons, brought up in certain occupations in a great city, are shut up from a knowledge of the world, and carry their simplicity to a pitch of unheard-of extravagance. London is the only place in which the child grows completely up into the man. I have known characters of this kind, which, in the way of childish ignorance and self-pleasing delusion, exceeded anything to be met with in Shakspeare or Ben Jonson, or the old comedy. For instance, the following may be taken as a true sketch. Imagine a person with a florid, shining complexion like a plough-boy, large staring teeth, a merry eye, his hair stuck into the fashion with curling-irons and pomatum,

a slender figure, and a decent suit of black—add to which the thoughtlessness of the school-boy, the forwardness of the thriving tradesman, and the plenary consciousness of the citizen of London—and you have Mr. Dunster before you, the fishmonger in the Poultry. You shall hear how he chirps over his cups, and exults in his private opinions. "I'll play no more with you," I said, "Mr. Dunster—you are five points in the game better than I am." I had just lost three half-crown rubbers at cribbage to him, which loss of mine he presently thrust into a canvas pouch (not a silk purse) out of which he had produced just before, first a few halfpence, then half a dozen pieces of silver, then a handful of guineas, and lastly, lying *perdu* at the bottom, a fifty-pound banknote. "I'll tell you what," I said, "I should like to play you a game at marbles"—this was a sort of Christmas party or Twelfth Night merry-making. "Marbles!" said Dunster, catching up the sound, and his eye brightening with childish glee, "What! you mean *ring-taw?*" "Yes." "I should beat you at it to a certainty. I was one of the best in our school (it was at Clapham, sir, the Rev. Mr. Denman's, at Clapham, was the place where I was brought up) though there were two others there better than me. They were the best that ever were. I'll tell you, sir, I'll give you an idea. There was a water-butt or cistern, sir, at our school, that turned with a cock. Now suppose that brass-ring which the window-curtain is fastened to, to be the cock, and that these boys were standing where we are, about twenty feet off—well, sir, I'll tell you what I have seen them do. One of them had a favorite taw (or *alley* we used to call them); he'd take aim at the cock of the cistern with this marble, as I may do now. Well, sir, will you believe it? such was his strength of knuckle and certainty of aim, he'd hit it, turn it, let the water out, and then, sir, when the water had run out as much as it wanted, the other boy (he'd just the same strength of knuckle, and the same certainty of eye) he'd aim at it too, be sure to hit it, turn it round, and stop the water from running out. Yes, what I tell you is very remarkable, but it's true. One of these boys was named Cock, and t' other Butler." "They might have been named Spigot and Fawcett, my dear sir, from your account of them." "I should not mind playing you at fives neither, though I'm out

of practice. I think I should beat you in a week: I was a real good one at that. A pretty game, sir! I had the finest ball that I suppose ever was seen. Made it myself, I'll tell you how, sir. You see, I put a piece of cork at the bottom, then I wound some fine worsted yarn round it, then I had to bind it round with some packthread, and then sew the case on. You'd hardly believe it, but I was the envy of the whole school for that ball. They all wanted to get it from me, but lord, sir, I would let none of them come near it. I kept it in my waistcoat pocket all day, and at night I used to take it to bed with me and put it under my pillow. I could n't sleep easy without it."

The same idle vein might be found in the country, but I doubt whether it would find a tongue to give it utterance. Cockneyism is a ground of native shallowness mounted with pertness and conceit. Yet with all this simplicity and extravagance in dilating on his favorite topics, Dunster is a man of spirit, of attention to business, knows how to make out and get in his bills, and is far from being hen-pecked. One thing is certain, that such a man must be a true Englishman and a loyal subject. He has a slight tinge of letters, with shame I confess it—has in his possession a volume of the European Magazine for the year 1761, and is an humble admirer of Tristram Shandy (particularly the story of the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles, which is something in his own endless manner) and of Gil Blas of Santillane. Over these (the last thing before he goes to bed at night) he smokes a pipe, and meditates for an hour. After all, what is there in these harmless half-lies, these fantastic exaggerations, but a literal, prosaic, *Cockney* translation of the admired lines in Gray's Ode to Eton College:—

> "What idle progeny succeed
> To chase the rolling circle's speed
> Or urge the flying ball?"

A man shut up all his life in his shop, without anything to interest him from one year's end to another but the cares and details of business, with scarcely any intercourse with books or opportunities for society, distracted with the buzz and glare and noise about him, turns for relief to the retrospect of his childish years; and

there, through the long vista, at one bright loop-hole, leading out of the thorny mazes of the world into the clear morning light, he sees the idle fancies and gay amusements of his boyhood dancing like motes in the sunshine. Shall we blame or shall we laugh at him, if his eye glistens, and his tongue grows wanton in their praise?

None but a Scotchman would—that pragmatical sort of personage, who thinks it a folly ever to have been young, and who, instead of dallying with the frail past, bends his brows upon the future, and looks only to the *main-chance*. Forgive me, dear Dunster, if I have drawn a sketch of some of thy venial foibles, and delivered thee into the hands of those Cockneys of the North, who will fall upon thee and devour thee, like so many cannibals without a grain of salt!

If familiarities in cities breed contempt, ignorance in the country breeds aversion and dislike. People come too much in contact in town: in other places they live too much apart, to unite cordially and easily. Our feelings, in the former case, are dissipated and exhausted by being called into constant and vain activity; in the latter they rust and grow dead for want of use. If there is an air of levity and indifference in London manners, there is a harshness, a moroseness, and disagreeable restraint in those of the country. We have little disposition to sympathy, when we have few persons to sympathize with: we lose the relish and capacity for social enjoyment the seldomer we meet. A habit of sullenness, coldness, and misanthropy grows upon us. If we look for hospitality and a cheerful welcome in country places, it must be in those where the arrival of a stranger is an event, the recurrence of which need not be greatly apprehended, or it must be on rare occasions, on "some high festival of once a year." Then indeed the stream of hospitality, so long dammed up, may flow without stint for a short season; or a stranger may be expected with the same sort of eager impatience as a caravan of wild beasts, or any other natural curiosity, that excites our wonder and fills up the craving of the mind after novelty. By degrees, however, even this last principle loses its effect: books, newspapers, whatever carries us out of ourselves into a world of which we see and know nothing, become distasteful, repulsive; and we turn

away with indifference and disgust from everything that disturbs our lethargic animal existence, or takes off our attention from our petty local interests and pursuits. Man, left long to himself, is no better than a mere clod; or his activity, for want of some other vent, preys upon himself, or is directed to splenetic, peevish dislikes, or vexatious, harassing persecution of others. I once drew a picture of country-life; it was a portrait of a particular place, a caricature if you will, but with certain allowances, I fear it was too like in the individual instance, and that it would hold too generally true. *See* ROUND TABLE, vol. ii., p. 116.

If these then are the faults and vices of the inhabitants of town or of the country, where should a man go to live, so as to escape from them? I answer, that in the country we have the society of the groves, the fields, the brooks, and in London a man may keep to himself, or choose his company as he pleases.

It appears to me that there is an amiable mixture of these two opposite characters in a person who chances to have passed his youth in London, and who has retired into the country for the rest of his life. We may find in such a one a social polish, a pastoral simplicity. He rusticates agreeably, and vegetates with a degree of sentiment. He comes to the next post-town to see for letters, watches the coaches as they pass, and eyes the passengers with a look of familiar curiosity, thinking that he too was a gay fellow in his time. He turns his horse's head down the narrow lane that leads homewards, puts on an old coat to save his wardrobe, and fills his glass nearer to the brim. As he lifts the purple juice to his lips and to his eye, and in the dim solitude that hems him round, thinks of the glowing line—

"This bottle 's the sun of our table"—

another sun rises upon his imagination; the sun of his youth, the blaze of vanity, the glitter of the metropolis, "glares round his soul, and mocks his closing eye-lids." The distant roar of coaches is in his ears—the pit stare upon him with a thousand eyes—Mrs. Siddons, Bannister, King, are before him—he starts, as from a dream, and swears he will to London; but the expense, the length of way deters him, and he rises the next morn-

ing to trace the footsteps of the hare that has brushed the dew-drops from the lawn, or to attend a meeting of Magistrates! Mr. Justice Shallow answered in some sort to this description of a retired Cockney and indigenous country-gentleman. He "knew the Inns of Court, where they would talk of mad Shallow yet, and where the bona robas were, and had them at commandment: aye, and had heard the chimes at midnight!"

It is a strange state of society (such as that in London) where a man does not know his next-door neighbor, and where the feelings (one would think) must recoil upon themselves, and either fester or become obtuse. Mr. Wordsworth, in the preface to his poem of the "Excursion," represents men in cities as so many wild beasts or evil spirits, shut up in cells of ignorance, without natural affections, and barricadoed down in sensuality and selfishness. The nerve of humanity is bound up, according to him, the circulation of the blood stagnates. And it would be so, if men were merely cut off from intercourse with their immediate neighbors, and did not meet together generally and more at large. But man in London becomes, as Mr. Burke has it, a sort of "public creature." He lives in the eye of the world, and the world in his. If he witnesses less of the details of private life, he has better opportunities of observing its larger masses and varied movements. He sees the stream of human life pouring along the streets—its comforts and embellishments piled up in the shops—the houses are proofs of the industry, the public buildings of the art and magnificence of man; while the public amusements and places of resort are a centre and support for social feeling. A playhouse alone is a school of humanity, where all eyes are fixed on the same gay or solemn scene, where smiles or tears are spread from face to face, and where a thousand hearts beat in unison! Look at the company in a country theatre (in comparison) and see the coldness, the sullenness, the want of sympathy, and the way in which they turn round to scan and scrutinize one another. In London there is a *public;* and each man is part of it. We are gregarious, and affect the kind. We have a sort of abstract existence; and a community of ideas and knowledge (rather than local proximity) is the bond of society and good-fellowship. This is one great cause of the tone of political feeling in large and populous cities.

There is here a visible body-politic, a type and image of that huge Leviathan the State. We comprehend that vast denomination, the *People*, of which we see a tenth part daily moving before us; and by having our imaginations emancipated from petty interests and personal dependence, we learn to venerate ourselves as men, and to respect the rights of human nature. Therefore it is that the citizens and freemen of London and Westminster are patriots by prescription, philosophers and politicians by the right of their birth-place. In the country, men are no better than a herd of cattle or scattered deer. They have no idea but of individuals, none of rights or principles—and a king, as the greatest individual, is the highest idea they can form. He is "a species alone," and as superior to any single peasant as the latter is to the peasant's dog, or to a crow flying over his head. In London the king is but as one to a million (numerically speaking), is seldom seen, and then distinguished only from others by the superior graces of his person. A country 'squire or a lord of the manor is a greater man in his village or hundred!

ESSAY VI.

On living to one's-self.*.

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po."

I NEVER was in a better place or humor than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come.

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the misty moon-light air see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

"While Heav'n's chancel-vault is blind with sleet,"

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader.

Lady G., in a letter to Miss Harriet Byron, assures her that "her brother Sir Charles lived to himself:" and Lady L. soon after (for Richardson was never tired of a good thing) repeats the

* Written at Winterslow Hut, January 18th—19th, 1821.

same observation; to which Miss Byron frequently returns in her answers to both sisters—"For you know Sir Charles lives to himself," till at length it passes into a proverb among the fair correspondents. This is not, however, an example of what I understand by *living to one's-self*, for Sir Charles Grandison was indeed always thinking of himself; but by this phrase I mean never thinking at all about one's-self, any more than if there was no such person in existence. The character I speak of is as little of an egotist as possible: Richardson's great favorite was as much of one as possible. Some satirical critic has represented him in Elysium "bowing over the *faded* hand of Lady Grandison" (Miss Byron that was)—he ought to have been represented bowing over his own hand, for he never admired any one but himself, and was the god of his own idolatry. Neither do I call it living to one's-self to retire into a desert (like the saints and martyrs of old) to be devoured by wild beasts, nor to descend into a cave to be considered as a hermit, nor to get to the top of a pillar of rock to do fanatic penance and be seen of all men. What I mean by living to one's-self is living in the world, as in it, not of it: it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wish no one to know it: it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loop-holes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of

spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moanings of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style, without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines—

> "The man whose eye is on himself,
> Doth look on one, the least of nature's works;
> One who might move the wise man to that scorn
> Which wisdom holds unlawful ever"—

ne looks out of himself at the wide extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Wo be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him. While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briars and thorns, vexations and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but to solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side—

> "To see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year; and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experi-

mentalist Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever fresh delight, "never ending, still beginning," and had no occasion to write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern: if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed as favorably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the state, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others; I had neither friend nor mistress, wife nor child. I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities, generally barters repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From that instant he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks asquint at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure; for a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double: he takes no farther interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them: instead of opening his senses, his understanding, and his heart to the resplendent fabric of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions, and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him, softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become the slave of opinion. He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion. He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze, but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear. He himself is

mixed up with, and spoils everything. I wonder Buonaparte was not tired of the N. N.'s stuck all over the Louvre and throughout France. Goldsmith (as we all know), when in Holland, went out into a balcony with some handsome Englishwomen, and on their being applauded by the spectators, turned round, and said peevishly—"There are places where I also am admired." He could not give the craving appetite of an author's vanity one day's respite. I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite are the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity; numberless the failures; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success—

> —"Whose top to climb
> Is certain falling, or so slippery, that
> The fear's bad as the falling."

"Would to God," exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at any time thwarted by the Parliament, "that I had remained by my woodside to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this!" When Buonaparte got into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove, and singing the air—"Malbrook to the wars is going"—he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself. We see and hear chiefly of the favorites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career:—not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with "the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" how many half-starved strolling players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country-places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn

drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions farther known than the Poet's-Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame! Suppose an actor, for instance, "after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to," *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne; to be second, or only equal to another, is to be nothing: he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp: perhaps as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him, and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again: he is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumor of the appearance of a new actor; a "mouse that takes up his lodging in a cat's ear" * has a mansion of peace to him: he dreads every hint of an objection, and least of all can forgive praise mingled with censure: to doubt is to insult, to discriminate is to degrade: he dare hardly look into a criticism unless some one has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it: if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can "eat his meal in peace," he then becomes surfeited with applause and dissatisfied with his profession: he wants to be something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half retracts it before he utters it, lest if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that *Mr. —— was only clever as an actor!* If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau was no other than a fool. A country-gentleman near Taunton spent his whole life in making some hundreds of wretched copies of second-rate pictures, which were bought up at his death by a neighboring Baronet, to whom

"Some demon whisper'd, L———, have a taste!"

* Webster's Duchess of Malfy.

A little Wilson in an obscure corner escaped the man of *virtù*, and was carried off by a Bristol picture-dealer for three guineas, while the muddled copies of the owner of the mansion (with the frames) fetched thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred ducats a-piece. A friend of mine found a very fine Canaletti in a state of strange disfigurement, with the upper part of the sky smeared over and fantastically variegated with English clouds; and on inquiring of the person to whom it belonged whether something had not been done to it, received for answer "that a gentleman, a great artist in the neighborhood, had retouched some parts of it." What infatuation! Yet this candidate for the honors of the pencil might probably have made a jovial fox-hunter or respectable justice of the peace, if he could only have stuck to what nature and fortune intended him for. Miss —— can by no means be persuaded to quit the boards of the theatre at ——, a little country town in the West of England. Her salary has been abridged, her person ridiculed, her acting laughed at; nothing will serve—she is determined to be an actress, and scorns to return to her former business as a milliner. Shall I go on? An actor in the same company was visited by the apothecary of the place in an ague-fit, who, on asking his landlady as to his way of life, was told that the poor gentleman was very quiet and gave little trouble, that he generally had a plate of mashed potatoes for his dinner, and lay in bed most of his time, repeating his part. A young couple, every way amiable and deserving, were to have been married, and a benefit-play was bespoke by the officers of the regiment quartered there, to defray the expense of a license and of the wedding-ring, but the profits of the night did not amount to the necessary sum, and they have, I fear, "virgined it e'er since!" Oh for the pencil of Hogarth or Wilkie to give a view of the comic strength of the company at ——, drawn up in battle-array in the Clandestine Marriage, with a *coup-d'œil* of the pit, boxes, and gallery, to cure for ever the love of the *ideal*, and the desire to shine and make holiday in the eyes of others, instead of retiring within ourselves and keeping our wishes and our thoughts at home!

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness

in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintance. Old companions are like meats served up too often, that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise: but let no man fall in love, for from that moment he is "the baby of a girl." I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play of Mirandola—

> —"With what a waving air she goes
> Along the corridor. How like a fawn!
> Yet statelier. Hark! No sound, however soft,
> Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,
> But every motion of her shape doth seem
> Hallowed by silence"—

but however beautiful the description, defend me from meeting with the original!

> "The fly that sips treacle
> Is lost in the sweets;
> So he that tastes woman
> Ruin meets."

The song is Gay's, not mine, and a bitter-sweet it is.—How few out of the infinite number of those that marry and are given in marriage, wed with those they would prefer to all the world; nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere motives of convenience, accident, recommendation of friends, or indeed not unfrequently by the very fear of the event, by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination: yet the tie is for life, not to be shaken off but with disgrace or death: a man no longer lives to himself, but is a body (as well as mind) chained to another, in spite of himself—

> "Like life and death in disproportion met."

So Milton (perhaps from his own experience) makes Adam exclaim, in the vehemence of his despair,

> "For either
> He shall never find out fit mate, but such

As some misfortune brings him or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate and shame;
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound."

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind offices; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and chilled by indifference and scorn; if so many lovers both before and since the madman in Don Quixotte had not "worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert;" if friendship were lasting; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches, and long life; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings; then indeed I might be of opinion that it is better to live to others than one's-self; but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question.*-

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be

* Shenstone and Gray were two men, one of whom pretended to live to himself, and the other really did so. Gray shrank from the public gaze (he did not even like his portrait to be prefixed to his works) into his own thoughts and indolent musings; Shenstone affected privacy, that he might be sought out by the world; the one courted retirement in order to enjoy leisure and repose, as the other coquetted with it, merely to be interrupted with the importunity of visitors and the flatteries of absent friends.

Words which are things—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem—
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy: but wo betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus dare to compare notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the Prologues to his plays, I think I should do it in good set terms, nearly as follows. There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldy, over-grown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumor, lest it should be behindhand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think, prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment, so that in short the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true: but we know or fancy that others believe it—we dare not contradict or are too indolent to dispute with them, and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay more, we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the

secret of the imposture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if any one has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant-phrase or nick-name ; and, by dint of effrontery and perseverance, make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false. The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said : by that circumstance alone we know that they produce a certain effect on the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far then is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight and shallow and variable to the last degree —the bubble of the moment—so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent. The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak. It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty. It is hasty in taking up its favorites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case. It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common sense nor common honesty to the other side. It reads the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale. Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the Characters of Shakspeare's Plays in about three months, but after the Quarterly Review of them came out, they never sold another copy. The public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance, then, but cowardice that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having fixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh brave public ! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow in his heart. Poor

Keats! What was sport to the town was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

> "A bud bit by an envious worm,
> Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate his beauty to the sun"—

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.—The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered—

> "A huge-sized monster of ingratitude."

It reads, it admires, it extols only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pretext, to pick a quarrel with you, and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature that gaped and wondered only because others did so, is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself. An author is not then, after all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanor, a contempt of court, an extreme piece of impertinence. Or if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracting their error, or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity; they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation on their judgment. The celebrated Bubb Doddington, when out of favor at court, said, "he would not *justify* before his sovereign: it was for majesty to be displeased, and for him to believe himself in the wrong!" The public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the Scotch Novels as overrated. How then can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule

all those who live by the public starve, and are made a bye-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton and Shakspeare. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead, they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate the anniversary of his birth-day in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were living? No!—I was complaining of this to a Scotchman who had been attending a dinner and a subscription to raise a monument to Burns. He replied, he would sooner subscribe twenty pounds to his monument than have given it him while living; so that if the poet were to come to life again, he would treat him just as he was treated in fact. This was an honest Scotchman. What *he* said, the res' would do.

Enough: my soul, turn from them, and let me try to regain the obscurity and quiet that I love, "far from the madding strife," in some sequestered corner of my own, or in some far-distant land! In the latter case, I might carry with me as a consolation the passage in Bolingbroke's Reflections on Exile, in which he describes in glowing colors the resources which a man may always find within himself, and of which the world cannot deprive him.

"Believe me, the providence of God has established such an order in the world, that of all which belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which contemplates and admires the world whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one we shall enjoy the other. Let us march therefore intrepidly wherever we are led by the course of human accidents. Wherever they lead us, on what coast soever we are thrown by them, we shall not find ourselves absolutely strangers. We shall feel

the same revolution of seasons, and the same sun and moon* will guide the course of our year. The same azure vault, bespangled with stars, will be everywhere spread over our heads. There is no part of the world from whence we may not admire those planets which roll, like ours, in different orbits round the same central sun; from whence we may not discover an object still more stupendous, that army of fixed stars hung up in the immense space of the universe, innumerable suns whose beams enlighten and cherish the unknown worlds which roll around them; and whilst I am ravished by such contemplations as these, whilst my soul is thus raised up to heaven, imports me little what ground I tread upon."

* "Plut. of Banishment. He compares those who cannot live out of their own country, to the simple people who fancied the moon of Athens was a finer moon than that of Corinth,

——*Labentem cælo quæ ducitis annum*

VIRG. Georg."

ESSAY VII.

On Genius and Common Sense.

We hear it maintained by people of more gravity than understanding, that genius and taste are strictly reducible to rules, and that there is a rule for everything. So far is it from being true that the finest breath of fancy is a definable thing, that the plainest common sense is only what Mr. Locke would have called a *mixed mode*, subject to a particular sort of acquired and undefinable tact. It is asked, "If you do not know the rule by which a thing is done, how can you be sure of doing it a second time?" And the answer is, "If you do not know the muscles by the help of which you walk, how is it you do not fall down at every step you take?" In art, in taste, in life, in speech, you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind, which impression is true and well-founded, though you may not be able to analyze or account for it in the several particulars. In a gesture you use, in a look you see, in a tone you hear, you judge of the expression, propriety, and meaning from habit, not from reason or rules; that is to say, from innumerable instances of like gestures, looks, and tones, in innumerable other circumstances, variously modified, which are too many and too refined to be all distinctly recollected, but which do not therefore operate the less powerfully upon the mind and eye of taste. Shall we say that these impressions (the immediate stamp of nature) do not operate in a given manner till they are classified and reduced to rules, or is not the rule itself grounded upon the truth and certainty of that natural operation? How then can the distinction of the understanding as to the manner in which they operate be necessary to their producing their due and uniform effect upon the mind? If certain effects did not regularly arise out of certain causes in mind as well as matter, there could

be no rule given for them: nature does not follow the rule, but suggests it. Reason is the interpreter and critic of nature and genius, not their lawgiver and judge. He must be a poor creature indeed whose practical convictions do not in almost all cases outrun his deliberate understanding, or who does not feel and know much more than he can give a reason for. Hence the distinction between eloquence and wisdom, between ingenuity and common sense. A man may be dexterous and able in explaining the grounds of his opinions, and yet may be a mere sophist, because he only sees one half of a subject. Another may feel the whole weight of a question, nothing relating to it may be lost upon him, and yet he may be able to give no account of the manner in which it affects him, or to drag his reasons from their silent lurking-places. This last will be a wise man, though neither a logician nor a rhetorician. Goldsmith was a fool to Dr. Johnson in argument; that is, in assigning the specific grounds of his opinions: Dr. Johnson was a fool to Goldsmith in the fine tact, the airy, intuitive faculty with which he skimmed the surfaces of things, and unconsciously formed his opinions. Common sense is the just result of the sum-total of such unconscious impressions in the ordinary occurrences of life, as they are treasured up in the memory, and called out by the occasion. Genius and taste depend much upon the same principle exercised on loftier ground and in more unusual combinations.

I am glad to shelter myself from the charge of affectation or singularity in this view of an often debated, but ill understood point, by quoting a passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, which is full, and, I think, conclusive to the purpose. He says,

"I observe, as a fundamental ground, common to all the Arts with which we have any concern in this Discourse, that they address themselves only to two faculties of the mind, its imagination and its sensibility.

"All theories which attempt to direct or to control the Art, upon any principles falsely called rational, which we form to ourselves upon a supposition of what ought in reason to be the end or means of Art, independent of the known first effect produced by objects on the imagination, must be false and delusive. For though it may appear bold to say it, the imagination is here the

residence of truth. If the imagination be affected, the conclusion is fairly drawn; if it be not affected, the reasoning is erroneous, because the end is not attained; the effect itself being the test, and the only test, of the truth and efficacy of the means.

"There is in the commerce of life, as in Art, a sagacity which is far from being contradictory to right reason, and is superior to any occasional exercise of that faculty; which supersedes it; and does not wait for the slow progress of deduction, but goes at once, by what appears a kind of intuition, to the conclusion. A man endowed with this faculty feels and acknowledges the truth, though it is not always in his power, perhaps, to give a reason for it; because he cannot recollect and bring before him all the materials that gave birth to his opinion; for very many and very intricate considerations may unite to form the principle, even of small and minute parts, involved in, or dependent on, a great system of things:—though these in process of time are forgotten, the right impression still remains fixed in his mind.

"This impression is the result of the accumulated experience of our whole life, and has been collected we do not always know how, or when. But this mass of collective observation, however acquired, ought to prevail over that reason, which, however powerfully exerted on any particular occasion, will probably comprehend but a partial view of the subject; and our conduct in life, as in the arts, is or ought to be generally governed by this habitual reason: it is our happiness that we are enabled to draw on such funds. If we were obliged to enter into a theoretical deliberation on every occasion before we act, life would be at a stand, and Art would be impracticable.

"It appears to me, therefore" (continues Sir Joshua), "that our first thoughts, that is, the effect which anything produces on our minds, on its first appearance, is never to be forgotten; and it demands for that reason, because it is the first, to be laid up with care. If this be not done, the artist may happen to impose on himself by partial reasoning; by a cold consideration of those animated thoughts which proceed, not perhaps from caprice or rashness (as he may afterwards conceit), but from the fulness of his mind, enriched with the copious stores of all the various inventions which he had ever seen, or had ever passed in his mind.

These ideas are infused into his design, without any conscious effort; but if he be not on his guard, he may reconsider and correct them, till the whole matter is reduced to a common-place invention.

"This is sometimes the effect of what I mean to caution you against: that is to say, an unfounded distrust of the imagination and feeling, in favor of narrow, partial, confined, argumentative theories, and of principles that seem to apply to the design in hand; without considering those general impressions on the fancy in which real principles of *sound reason*, and of much more weight and importance, are involved, and, as it were, lie hid under the appearance of a sort of vulgar sentiment. Reason, without doubt, must ultimately determine everything; at this minute it is required to inform us when that very reason is to give way to feeling."—Discourse XIII., vol. ii., p. 113–17.

Mr. Burke, by whom the foregoing train of thinking was probably suggested, has insisted on the same thing, and made rather a perverse use of it in several parts of his Reflections on the French Revolution; and Windham in one of his Speeches has clenched it into an aphorism—"There is nothing so true as habit." Once more I would say, common sense is tacit reason. Conscience is the same tacit sense of right and wrong, or the impression of our moral experience and moral apprehensions on the mind, which, because it works unseen, yet certainly, we suppose to be an instinct, implanted in the mind; as we sometimes attribute the violent operations of our passions, of which we can neither trace the source nor assign the reason, to the instigation of the Devil!

I shall here try to go more at large into this subject, and to give such instances and illustrations of it as occur to me.

One of the persons who had rendered themselves obnoxious to Government, and been included in a charge for high treason in the year 1794, had retired soon after into Wales to write an epic poem and enjoy the luxuries of a rural life. In his peregrinations through that beautiful scenery, he had arrived one fine morning at the inn at Llangollen, in the romantic valley of that name. He had ordered his breakfast, and was sitting at the window in all the dalliance of expectation, when a face passed of

which he took no notice at the instant—but when his breakfast was brought in presently after, he found his appetite for it gone, the day had lost its freshness in his eye, he was uneasy and spiritless; and without any cause that he could discover, a total change had taken place in his feelings. While he was trying to account for this odd circumstance, the same face passed again—it was the face of Taylor the spy; and he was no longer at a loss to explain the difficulty. He had before caught only a transient glimpse, a passing side-view of the face; but though this was not sufficient to awaken a distinct idea in his memory, his feelings, quicker and surer, had taken the alarm; a string had been touched that gave a jar to his whole frame, and would not let him rest, though he could not at all tell what was the matter with him. To the flitting, shadowy, half-distinguished profile that had glided by his window was linked unconsciously and mysteriously, but inseparably, the impression of the trains that had been laid for him by this person; —in this brief moment, in this dim, illegible short-hand of the mind, he had just escaped the speeches of the Attorney and Solicitor-General over again; the gaunt figure of Mr. Pitt glared by him; the walls of a prison enclosed him; and he felt the hands of the executioner near him, without knowing it till the tremor and disorder of his nerves gave information to his reasoning faculties that all was not well within. That is, the same state of mind was recalled by one circumstance in the series of association that had been produced by the whole set of circumstances at the time, though the manner in which this was done was not immediately perceptible. In other words, the feeling of pleasure or pain, of good or evil, is revived, and acts instantaneously upon the mind, before we have time to recollect the precise objects which have originally given birth to it.* The incident

* Sentiment has the same source as that here pointed out. Thus the *Ranz des Vaches*, which has such an effect on the minds of the Swiss peasantry, when its well known sound is heard, does not merely recall to them the idea of their country, but has associated with it a thousand nameless ideas, numberless touches of private affection, of early hope, romantic adventure, and national pride, all which rush in (with mingled currents) to swell the tide of fond remembrance, and make them languish or die for home. What a fine instrument the human heart is! Who shall touch it?

here mentioned was merely, then, one case of what the learned understand by the *association of ideas:* but all that is meant by feeling or common sense is nothing but the different cases of the association of ideas, more or less true to the impression of the original circumstances, as reason begins with the more formal development of those circumstances, or pretends to account for the different cases of the association of ideas. But it does not follow that the dumb and silent pleading of the former (though sometimes, nay, often mistaken) is less true than that of its babbling interpreter, or that we are never to trust its dictates without consulting the express authority of reason. Both are imperfect, both are useful in their way, and therefore both are best together, to correct or to confirm one another. It does not appear that in the singular instance above mentioned, the sudden impression on the mind was superstition or fancy, though it might have been thought so, had it not been proved by the event to have a real physical and moral cause. Had not the same face returned again, the doubt would never have been properly cleared up, but would have remained a puzzle ever after, or perhaps have been soon forgotten.—By the law of association, as laid down by physiologists, any impression in a series can recall any other impression in that series without going through the whole in order: so that the mind drops the intermediate links, and passes on rapidly and by stealth to the more striking effects of pleasure or pain which have naturally taken the strongest hold of it. By doing this habitually and skilfully with respect to the various impressions and circumstances with which our experience makes us acquainted, it forms a series of unpremeditated conclusions on almost all subjects that can be brought before it, as just as they are of ready application to human life; and common sense is the name of this body of unassuming but practical wisdom. Common sense, however, is an impartial, instinctive result of truth and nature, and will therefore bear the test and abide the scrutiny of the most severe and patient reasoning. It is indeed

Who shall fathom it? Who shall "sound it from its lowest note to the top of its compass?" Who shall put his hand among the strings, and explain their wayward music? The heart alone, when touched by sympathy, trembles and responds to their hidden meaning!

incomplete without it. By ingrafting reason on feeling, we "make assurance doubly sure."

> "'Tis the last key-stone that makes up the arch—
> Then stands it a triumphal mark! Then men
> Observe the strength, the height, the why and when
> It was erected: and still walking under,
> Meet some new matter to look up, and wonder."

But reason, not employed to interpret nature, and to improve and perfect common sense and experience, is, for the most part, a building without a foundation.—The criticism exercised by reason then on common sense may be as severe as it pleases, but it must be as patient as it is severe. Hasty, dogmatical, self-satisfied reason is worse than idle fancy, or bigoted prejudice. It is systematic, ostentatious in error, closes up the avenues of knowledge, and "shuts the gates of wisdom on mankind." It is not enough to show that there is no reason for a thing, that we do not see the reason of it: if the common feeling, if the involuntary prejudice sets in strong in favor of it, if, in spite of all we can do, there is a lurking suspicion on the side of our first impressions, we must try again, and believe that truth is mightier than we. So, in offering a definition of any subject, if we feel a misgiving that there is any fact or circumstance omitted, but of which we have only a vague apprehension, like a name we cannot recollect, we must ask for more time, and not cut the matter short by an arrogant assumption of the point in dispute. Common sense thus acts as a check-weight on sophistry, and suspends our rash and superficial judgments. On the other hand, if not only no reason can be given for a thing, but every reason is clear against it, and we can account from ignorance, from authority, from interest, from different causes, for the prevalence of an opinion or sentiment, then we have a right to conclude that we have mistaken a prejudice for an instinct, or have confounded a false and partial impression with the fair and unavoidable inference from general observation. Mr. Burke said that we ought not to reject every prejudice, but should separate the husk of prejudice from the truth it encloses, and so try to get at the kernel within; and thus far he was right. But he was wrong in insist-

ing that we are to cherish our prejudices, "because they are prejudices:" for if they are all well founded, there is no occasion to inquire into their origin or use; and he who sets out to philosophize upon them, or make the separation Mr. Burke talks of in this spirit and with this previous determination, will be very likely to mistake a maggot or a rotten canker for the precious kernel of truth, as was indeed the case with our political sophist.

There is nothing more distinct than common sense and vulgar opinion. Common sense is only a judge of things that fall under common observation, or immediately come home to the business and bosoms of men. This is of the very essence of its principle, the basis of its pretensions. It rests upon the simple process of feeling, it anchors in experience. It is not, nor it cannot be, the test of abstract, speculative opinions. But half the opinions and prejudices of mankind, those which they hold in the most unqualified approbation and which have been instilled into them under the strongest sanctions, are of this latter kind, that is, opinions, not which they have ever thought, known, or felt one tittle about, but which they have taken up on trust from others, which have been palmed on their understandings by fraud or force, and which they continue to hold at the peril of life, limb, property, and character, with as little warrant from common sense in the first instance as appeal to reason in the last. The *ultima ratio regum* proceeds upon a very different plea. Common sense is neither priestcraft nor state-policy. Yet "there's the rub that makes absurdity of so long life;" and, at the same time, gives the sceptical philosophers the advantage over us. Till nature has fair play allowed it, and it is not adulterated by political and polemical quacks (as it so often has been), it is impossible to appeal to it as a defence against the errors and extravagances of mere reason. If we talk of common sense, we are twitted with vulgar prejudice, and asked how we distinguish the one from the other: but common and received opinion is indeed "a compost heap" of crude notions, got together by the pride and passions of individuals, and reason is itself the thrall or manumitted slave of the same lordly and besotted masters, dragging its servile chain, or committing all sorts of Saturnalian licenses, the moment it feels itself freed from it.—If ten millions of Englishmen are

furious in thinking themselves right in making war upon thirty millions of Frenchmen, and if the last are equally bent upon thinking the others always in the wrong, though it is a common and national prejudice, both opinions cannot be the dictate of good sense: but it may be the infatuated policy of one or both governments to keep their subjects always at variance. If a few centuries ago all Europe believed in the infallibility of the Pope, this was not an opinion derived from the proper exercise or erroneous direction of the common sense of the people: common sense had nothing to do with it—they believed whatever their priests told them. England at present is divided into Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Dissenters: both parties have numbers on their side; but common sense and party-spirit are two different things. Sects and heresies are upheld partly by sympathy, and partly by the love of contradiction: if there was nobody of a different way of thinking, they would fall to pieces of themselves. If a whole court say the same thing, this is no proof that they think it, but that the individual at the head of the court has said it: if a mob agree for a while in shouting the same watch-word, this is not to me an example of the *sensus communis;* they only repeat what they have heard repeated by others. If indeed a large proportion of the people are in want of food, of clothing, of shelter, if they are sick, miserable, scorned, oppressed, and if each feeling it in himself, they all say so with one voice and one heart, and lift up their hands to second their appeal, this I should say was but the dictate of common sense, the cry of nature. But to waive this part of the argument, which it is needless to push farther, I believe that the best way to instruct mankind is not by pointing out to them their mutual errors, but by teaching them to think rightly on different matters, where they will listen with patience in order to be amused, and where they do not consider a definition or a syllogism as the greatest injury you can offer them.

There is no rule for expression. It is got at solely by *feeling*, that is, on the principle of the association of ideas, and by transferring what has been found to hold good in one case (with the necessary modifications) to others. A certain look has been remarked strongly indicative of a certain passion o trait of cha-

racter, and we attach the same meaning to it or are affected in the same pleasurable or painful manner by it, where it exists in a less degree, though we can define neither the look itself nor the modification of it. Having got the general clue, the exact result may be left to the imagination to vary, to extenuate or aggravate it according to circumstances. In the admirable profile of Oliver Cromwell after ———, the drooping eye-lids, as if drawing a veil over the fixed, penetrating glance, the nostrils somewhat distended, and lips compressed so as hardly to let the breath escape him, denote the character of the man for high-reaching policy and deep designs as plainly as they can be written. How is it that we decipher this expression in the face? First, by feeling it: and how is it that we feel it? Not by pre-established rules, but by the instinct of analogy, by the principle of association, which is subtle and sure in proportion as it is variable and indefinite. A circumstance, apparently of no value, shall alter the whole interpretation to be put upon an expression or action; and it shall alter it thus powerfully because in proportion to its very insignificance it shows a strong general principle at work that extends in its ramifications to the smallest things. This in fact will make all the difference between minuteness and subtlety or refinement; for a small or trivial effect may in given circumstances imply the operation of a great power. Stillness may be the result of a blow too powerful to be resisted; silence may be imposed by feelings too agonizing for utterance. The minute, the trifling and insipid, is that which is little in itself, in its causes and its consequences: the subtle and refined is that which is slight and evanescent at first sight, but which mounts up to a mighty sum in the end, which is an essential part of an important whole, which has consequences greater than itself, and where more is meant than meets the eye or ear. We complain sometimes of littleness in a Dutch picture, where there are a vast number of distinct parts and objects, each small in itself, and leading to nothing else. A sky of Claude's cannot fall under this censure, where one imperceptible gradation is as it were the scale to another, where the broad arch of heaven is piled up of endlessly intermediate gold and azure tints, and where an infinite number of minute, scarce noticed particulars blend and melt into

universal harmony. The subtlety in Shakspeare, of which there is an immense deal everywhere scattered up and down, is always the instrument of passion, the vehicle of character. The action of a man pulling his hat over his forehead is indifferent enough in itself, and, generally speaking, may mean anything or nothing: but in the circumstances in which Macduff is placed, it is neither insignificant nor equivocal.

> "What! man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows," &c.

It admits but of one interpretation or inference, that which follows it:—

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

The passage in the same play, in which Duncan and his attendants are introduced commenting on the beauty and situation of Macbeth's castle, though familiar in itself, has been often praised for the striking contrast it presents to the scenes which follow. The same look in different circumstances may convey a totally different expression. Thus the eye turned round to look at you without turning the head indicates generally slyness or suspicion; but if this is combined with large expanded eye-lids or fixed eyebrows, as we see it in Titian's pictures, it will denote calm contemplation or piercing sagacity, without anything of meanness or fear of being observed. In other cases, it may imply merely indolent enticing voluptuousness, as in Lely's portraits of women. The languor and weakness of the eye-lids gives the amorous turn to the expression. How should there be a rule for all this beforehand, seeing it depends on circumstances ever varying, and scarce discernible but by their effect on the mind? Rules are applicable to abstractions, but expression is concrete and individual. We know the meaning of certain looks, and we feel how they modify one another in conjunction. But we cannot have a separate rule to judge of all their combinations in different degrees and circumstances, without foreseeing all those combinations, which is impossible: or if we did foresee them, we should

only be where we are ; that is, we could only make the rule as we now judge without it, from imagination and the feeling of the moment. The absurdity of reducing expression to a preconcerted system was perhaps never more evidently shown than in a picture of the Judgment of Solomon by so great a man as N. Poussin, which I once heard admired for the skill and discrimination of the artist in making all the women, who are ranged on one side, in the greatest alarm at the sentence of the judge, while all the men on the opposite side see through the design of it. Nature does not go to work or cast things in a regular mould in this sort of way. I once heard a person remark of another— "He has an eye like a vicious horse." This was a fair analogy. We all, I believe, have noticed the look of a horse's eye, just before he is going to bite or kick. But will any one, therefore, describe to me exactly what that look is ? It was the same acute observer that said of a self-sufficient prating music-master—"He talks on all subjects *at sight*"—which expressed the man at once by an allusion to his profession. The coincidence was indeed perfect. Nothing else could compare to the easy assurance with which this gentleman would volunteer an explanation of things of which he was most ignorant, but the *nonchalance* with which a musician sits down to a harpsichord to play a piece he has never seen before. My physiognomical friend would not have hit on this mode of illustration without knowing the profession of the subject of his criticism ; but having this hint given him, it instantly suggested itself to his "sure trailing." The manner of the speaker was evident ; and the association of the music-master sitting down to play at sight, lurking in his mind, was immediately called out by the strength of his impression of the character. The feeling of character, and the felicity of invention in explaining it, were nearly allied to each other. The first was so wrought up and running over, that the transition to the last was easy and unavoidable. When Mr. Kean was so much praised for the action of Richard in his last struggle with his triumphant antagonist, where he stands, after his sword is wrested from him, with his hands stretched out, "as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power," he said that he borrowed it from seeing the last efforts of Painter in his fight with

Oliver. This assuredly did not lessen the merit of it. Thus it ever is with the man of real genius. He has the feeling of truth already shrined in his own breast, and his eye is still bent on nature to see how she expresses herself. When we thoroughly understand the subject, it is easy to translate from one language into another. Raphael, in muffling up the figure of Elymas the Sorcerer in his garments, appears to have extended the idea of blindness even to his clothes. Was this design? Probably not; but merely the feeling of analogy thoughtlessly suggesting this device, which being so suggested was retained and carried on, because it flattered or fell in with the original feeling. The tide of passion, when strong, overflows and gradually insinuates itself into all nooks and corners of the mind. Invention (of the best kind) I therefore do not think so distinct a thing from feeling, as some are apt to imagine. The springs of pure feeling will rise and fill the moulds of fancy that are fit to receive it. There are some striking coincidences of color in well-composed pictures, as in a straggling weed in the foreground streaked with blue or red to answer to a blue or red drapery, to the tone of the flesh or an opening in the sky :—not that this was intended, or done by rule (for then it would presently become affected and ridiculous), but the eye being imbued with a certain color, repeats and varies it from a natural sense of harmony, a secret craving and appetite for beauty which in the same manner soothes and gratifies the eye of taste though the cause is not understood. *Tact, finesse*, is nothing but the being completely aware of the feeling belonging to certain situations, passions, &c., and the being consequently sensible to their slightest indications or movements in others. One of the most remarkable instances of this sort of faculty is the following story, told of Lord Shaftesbury, the grandfather of the author of the Characteristics. He had been to dine with Lady Clarendon and her daughter, who was at that time privately married to the Duke of York (afterwards James II.) and as he returned home with another nobleman who had accompanied him, he suddenly turned to him, and said, "Depend upon it, the Duke has married Hyde's daughter." His companion could not comprehend what he meant; but on explaining himself, he said, "Her mother behaved to her with an

attention and a marked respect that it is impossible to account for in any other way; and I am sure of it." His conjecture shortly afterwards proved to be the truth. This was carrying the prophetic spirit of common sense as far as it could go.

ESSAY VIII.

The same subject continued.

Genius or originality is, for the most part, *some strong quality in the mind, answering to and bringing out some new and striking quality in nature.*

Imagination is, more properly, the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations, which must be done best according to the hold which the feeling itself has taken of the mind.* In new and unknown combinations, the impression must act by sympathy, and not by rule; but there can be no sympathy, where there is no passion, no original interest. The personal interest may in some cases oppress and circumscribe the imaginative faculty, as in the instance of Rousseau: but in general the strength and consistency of the imagination will be in proportion to the strength and depth of feeling; and it is rarely that a man even of lofty genius will be able to do more than carry on his own feelings and character, or some prominent and ruling passion, into fictitious and uncommon situations. Milton has by allusion embodied a great part of his political and personal history in the chief characters and incidents of Paradise Lost. He has, no doubt, wonderfully adapted and heightened them, but the elements are the same; you trace the bias and opinions of the man in the creations of the poet. Shakspeare (almost alone) seems to have been a man of genius, raised above the definition of genius. "Born universal heir to all humanity," he was "as one, in suffering all who suffered nothing;" with a perfect sympathy with all things, yet alike indifferent to all: who did not tamper with nature or warp her to his own purposes; who "knew all quali-

* I do not here speak of the figurative or fanciful exercise of the imagination, which consists in finding out some striking object or image to illustrate another.

ties with a learned spirit," instead of judging of them by his own predilections; and was rather "a pipe for the Muse's finger to play what stop she pleased," than anxious to set up any character or pretensions of his own. His genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose: his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it. He was the Proteus of human intellect. Genius in ordinary is a more obstinate and less versatile thing. It is sufficiently exclusive and self-willed, quaint and peculiar. It does some one thing by virtue of doing nothing else: it excels in some one pursuit by being blind to all excellence but its own. It is just the reverse of the cameleon; for it does not borrow, but lends its colors to all about it: or like the glow-worm, discloses a little circle of gorgeous light in the twilight of obscurity, in the night of intellect, that surrounds it. So did Rembrandt. If ever there was a man of genius, he was one, in the proper sense of the term. He lived in and revealed to others a world of his own, and might be said to have invented a new view of nature. He did not discover things *out of* nature, in fiction or fairy land, or make a voyage to the moon "to descry new lands, rivers, or mountains in her spotty globe," but saw things *in* nature that every one had missed before him, and gave others eyes to see them with. This is the test and triumph of originality, not to show us what has never been, and what we may therefore very easily never have dreamt of, but to point out to us what is before our eyes and under our feet, though we have had no suspicion of its existence, for want of sufficient strength of intuition, of determined grasp of mind to seize and retain it. Rembrandt's conquests were not over the *ideal*, but the real. He did not contrive a new story or character, but we nearly owe to him a fifth part of painting, the knowledge of *chiaro-scuro*—a distinct power and element in art and nature. He had a steadiness, a firm keeping of mind and eye, that first stood the shock of "fierce extremes" in light and shade, or reconciled the greatest obscurity and the greatest brilliancy into perfect harmony; and he therefore was the first to hazard this appearance upon canvas, and give full effect to what he saw and delighted in. He was led to adopt this style of broad and startling contrast from its congeniality to his

own feelings: his mind grappled with that which afforded the best exercise to its master-powers: he was bold in act, because he was urged on by a strong native impulse. Originality is then nothing but nature and feeling working in the mind. A man does not affect to be original: he is so, because he cannot help it, and often without knowing it. This extraordinary artist indeed might be said to have had a particular organ for color. His eye seemed to come in contact with it as a feeling, to lay hold of it as a substance, rather than to contemplate it as a visual object. The texture of his landscapes is "of the earth, earthy"—his clouds are humid, heavy, slow; his shadows are "darkness that may be felt," a "palpable obscure;" his lights are lumps of liquid splendor; there is something more in this than can be accounted for from design or accident: Rembrandt was not a man made up of two or three rules and directions for acquiring genius.

I am afraid I shall hardly write so satisfactory a character of Mr. Wordsworth, though he, too, like Rembrandt, has a faculty of making something out of nothing, that is, out of himself, by the medium through which he sees and with which he clothes the barrenest subject. Mr. Wordsworth is the last man to "look abroad into universality," if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into himself, and is "content with riches fineless." He would in the other case be "poor as winter," if he had nothing but general capacity to trust to. He is the greatest, that is, the most original poet of the present day, only because he is the greatest egotist. He is "self-involved, not dark." He sits in the centre of his own being, and there "enjoys bright day." He does not waste a thought on others. Whatever does not relate exclusively and wholly to himself, is foreign to his views. He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity. He thrusts aside all other objects, all other interests, with scorn and impatience, that he may repose on his own being, that he may dig out the treasures of thought contained in it, that he may unfold the precious stores of a mind for ever brooding over itself. His genius is the effect of his individual character. He stamps that character, that deep individual interest, on whatever he meets. The object is

nothing but as it furnishes food for internal meditation, for old associations. If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would have been just what it is. If there had been neither love nor friendship, neither ambition nor pleasure nor business in the world, the author of the Lyrical Ballads need not have been greatly changed from what he is—might still have "kept the noiseless tenor of his way," retired in the sanctuary of his own heart, hallowing the Sabbath of his own thoughts. With the passions, the pursuits, and imaginations of other men, he does not profess to sympathize, but "finds tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing." With a mind averse from outward objects, but ever intent upon its own workings, he hangs a weight of thought and feeling upon every trifling circumstance connected with his past history. The note of the cuckoo sounds in his ear like the voice of other years; the daisy spreads its leaves in the rays of boyish delight, that stream from his thoughtful eyes; the rainbow lifts its proud arch in heaven but to mark his progress from infancy to manhood; an old thorn is buried, bowed down under the mass of associations he has wound about it; and to him, as he himself beautifully says,

> ——"The meanest flow'r that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

It is this power of habitual sentiment, or of transferring the interest of our conscious existence to whatever gently solicits attention, and is a link in the chain of association, without rousing our passions or hurting our pride, that is the striking feature in Mr. Wordsworth's mind and poetry. Others have felt and shown this power before, as Withers, Burns, &c., but none have felt it so intensely and absolutely as to lend to it the voice of inspiration, as to make it the foundation of a new style and school in poetry. His strength, as it so often happens, arises from the excess of his weakness. But he has opened a new avenue to the human heart, has explored another secret haunt and nook of nature, "sacred to verse, and sure of everlasting fame." Compared with his lines, Lord Byron's stanzas are but exaggerated common-place,

and Walter Scott's poetry (not his prose) old wives' fables.* There is no one in whom I have been more disappointed than in the writer here spoken of, nor with whom I am more disposed on certain points to quarrel: but the love of truth and justice which obliges me to do this, will not suffer me to blench his merits. Do what he can, he cannot help being an original-minded man. His poetry is not servile. While the cuckoo returns in the spring, while the daisy looks bright in the sun, while the rainbow lifts its head above the storm—

> "Yet I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
> And all that thou hast done for me!"

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in endeavoring to show that there is no such thing as proper originality, a spirit emanating from the mind of the artist and shining through his works, has traced Raphael through a number of figures which he has borrowed from Masaccio and others. This is a bad calculation. If Raphael had only borrowed those figures from others, would he, even in Sir Joshua's sense, have been entitled to the praise of originality? Plagiarism, I presume, in so far as it is plagiarism, is not originality. Salvator is considered by many as a great genius. He was what they call an irregular genius. My notion of genius is not exactly the same as theirs. It has also been made a question whether there is not more genius in Rembrandt's *Three Trees* than in all Claude Lorraine's landscapes? I do not know how that may be: but it was enough for Claude to have been a perfect landscape-painter.

Capacity is not the same thing as genius. Capacity may be described to relate to the quantity of knowledge, however acquired; genius to its quality and the mode of acquiring it. Capacity is a power over given ideas or combinations of ideas; genius is the power over those which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down. Or capacity is power of any sort: genius is power of a different sort from what has yet been shown. A retentive memory, a clear understand-

* Mr. Wordsworth himself should not say this, and yet I am not sure he would not.

ing is capacity, but it is not genius. The admirable Crichton was a person of prodigious capacity ; but there is no proof (that I know of) that he had an atom of genius. His verses that remain are dull and sterile. He could learn all that was known of any subject : he could do anything if others could show him the way to do it. This was very wonderful : but that is all you can say of it. It requires a good capacity to play well at chess : but, after all, it is a game of skill, and not of genius. Know what you will of it, the understanding still moves in certain tracks in which others have trod before it, quicker or slower, with more or less comprehension and presence of mind. The greatest skill strikes out nothing for itself, from its own peculiar resources ; the nature of the game is a thing determinate and fixed : there is no royal or poetical road to check-mate your adversary. There is no place for genius but in the indefinite and unknown. The discovery of the binomial theorem was an effort of genius ; but there was none shown in Jedediah Buxton's being able to multiply 9 figures by 9 in his head. If he could have multiplied 90 figures by 90 instead of nine, it would have been equally useless toil and trouble.* He is a man of capacity who possesses considerable intellectual riches : he is a man of genius who finds out a vein of new ore. Originality is the seeing nature differently from others, and yet as it is in itself. It is not singularity or affectation, but the discovery of new and valuable truth. All the world do not see the whole meaning of any object they have been looking at. Habit blinds them to some things ; short-sightedness to others. Every

* The only good thing I ever heard come of this man's singular faculty of memory was the following. A gentleman was mentioning his having been sent up to London from the place where he lived to see Garrick act. When he went back into the country, he was asked what he thought of the player and the play. "Oh!" he said, "he did not know : he had only seen a little man strut about the stage, and repeat 7956 words." We all laughed at this, but a person in one corner of the room, holding one hand to his forehead, and seeming mightily delighted, called out, "Ay, indeed! And pray, was he found to be correct?" This was the supererogation of literal matter-of-fact curiosity. Jedediah Buxton's counting the number of words was idle enough ; but here was a fellow who wanted some one to count them over again to see if he was correct.

"The force of *dulness* could no farther go!"

mind is not a gauge and measure of truth. Nature has her surface and her dark recesses. She is deep, obscure, and infinite. It is only minds on whom she makes her fullest impressions that can penetrate her shrine or unveil her *Holy of Holies*. It is only those whom she has filled with her spirit that have the boldness or the power to reveal her mysteries to others. But nature has a thousand aspects, and one man can only draw out one of them. Whoever does this, is a man of genius. One displays her force, another her refinement, one her power of harmony, another her suddenness of contrast, one her beauty of form, another her splendor of color. Each does that for which he is best fitted by his particular genius, that is to say, by some quality of mind into which the quality of the object sinks deepest, where it finds the most cordial welcome, is perceived to its utmost extent, and where again it forces its way out from the fulness with which it has taken possession of the mind of the student. The imagination gives out what it has first absorbed by congeniality of temperament, what it has attracted and moulded into itself by elective affinity, as the loadstone draws and impregnates iron. A little originality is more esteemed and sought for than the greatest acquired talent, because it throws a new light upon things, and is peculiar to the individual. The other is common; and may be had for the asking, to any amount.

The value of any work is to be judged of by the quantity of originality contained in it. A very little of this will go a great way. If Goldsmith had never written anything but the two or three first chapters of the Vicar of Wakefield, or the character of a Village-Schoolmaster, they would have stamped him a man of genius. The Editors of Encyclopedias are not usually reckoned the first literary characters of the age. The works, of which they have the management, contain a great deal of knowledge, like chests or warehouses, but the goods are not their own. We should as soon think of admiring the shelves of a library; but the shelves of a library are useful and respectable. I was once applied to, in a delicate emergency, to write an article on a difficult subject for an Encyclopedia, and was advised to take time and give it a systematic and scientific form, to avail myself of all the knowledge that was to be obtained on the subject, and arrange

it with clearness and method. I made answer that as to the first, I had taken time to do all that I ever pretended to do, as I had thought incessantly on different matters for twenty years of my life*; that I had no particular knowledge of the subject in question, and no head for arrangement; and that the utmost I could do in such a case would be, when a systematic and scientific article was prepared, to write marginal notes upon it, to insert a remark or illustration of my own (not to be found in former Encyclopedias) or to suggest a better definition than had been offered in the text. There are two sorts of writing. The first is compilation; and consists in collecting and stating all that is already known of any question in the best possible manner, for the benefit of the uninformed reader. An author of this class is a very learned amanuensis of other people's thoughts. The second sort proceeds on an entirely different principle. Instead of bringing down the account of knowledge to the point at which it has already arrived, it professes to start from that point on the strength of the writer's individual reflections; and supposing the reader in possession of what is already known, supplies deficiencies, fills up certain blanks, and quits the beaten road in search of new tracts of observation or sources of feeling. It is in vain to object to this last style that it is disjointed, disproportioned, and irregular. It is merely a set of additions and corrections to other men's works, or to the common stock of human knowledge, printed separately. You might as well expect a continued chain of reasoning in the notes to a book. It skips all the trite, intermediate, level common-places of the subject, and only stops at the difficult passages of the human mind, or touches on some striking point that has been overlooked in previous editions. A view of a subject, to be connected and regular, cannot be all new. A writer will always be liable to be charged either with paradox or common-place, either with dullness or affectation. But we have no right to demand from any one more than he pretends to. There is indeed a medium in all things, but to unite opposite excellences, is a task ordinarily too hard for mortality. He who

* Sir Joshua Reynolds being asked how long it had taken him to do a certain picture, made answer, "All his life."

succeeds in what he aims at, or who takes the lead in any one mode or path of excellence, may think himself very well off. It would not be fair to complain of the style of an Encyclopedia as dull, as wanting volatile salt; nor of the style of an Essay because it is too light and sparkling, because it is not a *caput mortuum*. So it is rather an odd objection to a work that is made up entirely of "brilliant passages"—at least it is a fault that can be found with few works, and the book might be pardoned for its singularity. The censure might indeed seem like adroit flattery, if it were not passed on an author whom any objection is sufficient to render unpopular and ridiculous. I grant it is best to unite solidity with show, general information with particular ingenuity. This is the pattern of a perfect style: but I myself do not pretend to be a perfect writer. In fine, we do not banish light French wines from our tables, or refuse to taste sparkling Champagne when we can get it, because it has not the body of Old Port. Besides, I do not know that dulness is strength, or that an observation is slight, because it is striking. Mediocrity, insipidity, want of character, is the great fault. *Mediocribus esse poetis non Dii, non homines, non concessêre columnæ.* Neither is this privilege allowed to prose-writers in our time, any more than to poets formerly.

It is not then acuteness of organs or extent of capacity that constitutes rare genius or produces the most exquisite models of art, but an intense sympathy with some one beauty or distinguishing characteristic in nature. Irritability alone, or the interest taken in certain things, may supply the place of genius in weak and otherwise ordinary minds. As there are certain instruments fitted to perform certain kinds of labor, there are certain minds so framed as to produce certain *chef-d'œuvres* in art and literature, which is surely the best use they can be put to. If a man had all sorts of instruments in his shop and wanted one, he would rather have that one than be supplied with a double set of all the others. If he had them all twice over, he could only do what he can do as it is, whereas without that one he perhaps cannot finish any one work he has in hand. So if a man can do one thing better than anybody else, the value of this one thing is what he must stand or fall by, and his being able to do a hundred other

things merely *as well* as anybody else, would not alter the sentence or add to his respectability; on the contrary, his being able to do so many other things well would probably interfere with and encumber him in the execution of the only thing that others cannot do as well as he, and so far be a draw-back and a disadvantage. More people in fact fail from a multiplicity of talents and pretensions than from an absolute poverty of resources. I have given instances of this elsewhere. Perhaps Shakspeare's tragedies would in some respects have been better, if he had never written comedies at all; and in that case, his comedies might well have been spared, though they might have cost us some regret. Racine, it is said, might have rivalled Moliere in comedy; but he gave up the cultivation of his comic talents to devote himself wholly to he tragic Muse. If, as the French tell us, he in consequence attained to the perfection of tragic composition, this was better than writing comedies as well as Molière and tragedies as well as Crebillon. Yet I count those persons fools who think it a pity Hogarth did not succeed better in serious subjects. The division of labor is an excellent principle in taste as well as in mechanics. Without this, I find from Adam Smith, we could not have a pin made to the degree of perfection it is. We do not, on any rational scheme of criticism, inquire into the variety of a man's excellences, or the number of his works, or his facility of production. Venice Preserved is sufficient for Otway's fame. I hate all those nonsensical stories about Lopez de Vega and his writing a play in a morning before breakfast. He had time enough to do it after. If a man leaves behind him any work which is a model in its kind, we have no right to ask whether he could do anything else, or how he did it, or how long he was about it. All that talent which is not necessary to the actual quantity of excellence existing in the world, loses its object, is so much waste talent or *talent to let*. I heard a sensible man say he should like to do some one thing better than all the rest of the world, and in everything else to be like all the rest of the world. Why should a man do more than his part? The rest is vanity and vexation of spirit. We look with jealous and grudging eye at all those qualifications which are not essential; first, because they are superfluous, and next, because

we suspect they will be prejudicial. Why does Mr. Kean play all those harlequin tricks of singing, dancing, fencing, &c. ? They say, "It is for his benefit." It is not for his reputation. Garrick indeed shone equally in comedy and tragedy. But he was first, not second-rate in both. There is not a greater impertinence than to ask, if a man is clever out of his profession. I have heard of people trying to cross-examine Mrs. Siddons. I would as soon try to entrap one of the Elgin Marbles into an argument. Good nature and common sense are required from all people : but one proud distinction is enough for any one individual to possess or to aspire to !

ESSAY IX.

Hot and Cold.

——"*Hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce,*
Strive here for mastery."—MILTON.

"THE Protestants are much cleaner than the Catholics," said a shopkeeper of Vevay to me. "They are so," I replied, "but why should they?" A prejudice appeared to him a matter-of-fact, and he did not think it necessary to assign reasons for a matter-of-fact. That is not my way. He had not bottomed his proposition on proofs, nor rightly defined it.

Nearly the same remark, as to the extreme cleanliness of the people in this part of the country, had occurred to me as soon as I got to Brigg, where however the inhabitants are Catholics. So the original statement requires some qualification as to the mode of enunciation. I had no sooner arrived in this village, which is situated just under the Simplon, and where you are surrounded with *glaciers* and *goitres*, than the genius of the place struck me on looking out at the pump under my window the next morning, where the "neat-handed Phyllises" were washing their greens in the water, that not a caterpillar could crawl on them, and scouring their pails and tubs that not a stain should be left in them. The raw, clammy feeling of the air was in unison with the scene. I had not seen such a thing in Italy. They have there no delight in splashing and dabbling in fresh streams and fountains—they have a dread of ablutions and abstersions, almost amounting to *hydrophobia*. Heat has an antipathy in nature to cold. The sanguine Italian is chilled and shudders at the touch of cold water, while the Helvetian boor, whose humors creep through his veins like the dank mists along the sides of his frozen mountains is "native and endued unto that element." Here everything is purified and filtered: there it is baked and burnt

up, and sticks together in a most amicable union of filth and laziness. There is a little mystery and a little contradiction in the case—let us try if we cannot get rid of both by means of caution and daring together. It is not that the difference of latitude between one side of the Alps and the other can signify much; but the phlegmatic blood of their German ancestors is poured down the valleys of the Swiss like water, and *iced* in its progress;—whereas that of the Italians, besides its vigorous origin, is enriched and ripened by basking in more genial plains. A single Milanese market-girl (to go no farther south) appeared to me to have more blood in her body, more fire in her eye (as if the sun had made a burning *lens* of it), more spirit and probably more mischief about her than all the nice, *tidy*, good-looking, hard-working girls I have seen in Switzerland. To turn this physiognomical observation to a metaphysical account, I should say then that Northern people are clean and Southern people dirty as a general rule, because where the principle of life is more cold, weak, and impoverished, there is a greater shyness and aversion to come in contact with external matter (with which it does not so easily amalgamate), a greater fastidiousness and delicacy in choosing its sensations, a greater desire to know surrounding objects and to keep them clear of each other, than where this principle being more warm and active, it may be supposed to absorb outward impressions in itself, to melt them into its own essence, to impart its own vital impulses to them, and in fine, instead of shrinking from everything, to be shocked at nothing. The Southern temperament is (so to speak) more sociable with matter, more gross, impure, indifferent, from relying on its own strength; while that opposed to it, from being less able to react on external applications, is obliged to be more cautious and particular as to the kind of excitement to which it renders itself liable. Hence the timidity, reserve, and occasional hypocrisy of Northern manners; the boldness, freedom, levity, and frequent licentiousness of Southern ones. It would be too much to say, that if there is anything of which a genuine Italian has a horror, it is of cleanliness; or that if there is anything which seems ridiculous to a thoroughly-bred Italian woman, it is modesty: but certainly the degree to which nicety is carried by some people is a *bore* to an

Italian imagination, as the excess of delicacy which is pretended or practised by some women is quite incomprehensible to the females of the South. It is wrong, however, to make the greater confidence or forwardness of manners an absolute test of morals: the love of virtue is a different thing from the fear or even hatred of vice The squeamishness and prudery in the one case have a more plausible appearance; but it does not follow that there may not be more native goodness and even habitual refinement in the other, though accompanied with stronger nerves and a less morbid imagination. But to return to the first question.* I can readily understand how a Swiss peasant should stand a whole morning at a pump, washing cabbages, cauliflowers, salads, and getting rid half a dozen times over of the sand, dirt, and insects they contain, because I myself should not only be *gravelled* by meeting with the one at table, but should be in horrors at the other. A Frenchman or an Italian would be thrown into convulsions of laughter at this superfluous delicacy, and would think his repast enriched or none the worse for such additions. The reluctance to prey on life, or on what once had it, seems to arise from a sense of incongruity, from the repugnance between life and death—from the cold, clammy feeling which belongs to the one, and which is enhanced by the contrast to its former warm, lively state, and by the circumstance of its being taken into the mouth, and devoured as food. Hence the desire to get rid of the idea of the living animal even in ordinary cases by all the disguises of cookery, of boiled and roast, and by the artifice of changing the name of the animal into something different when it becomes food.† Hence sportsmen are not devourers of game,

* Women abroad (generally speaking) are more like men in the tone of their conversation and habits of thinking, so that from the same premises you cannot draw the same conclusions as in England.

† This circumstance is noticed in Ivanhoe, though a different turn is given to it by the philosopher of Rotherwood.

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba in the same tone, "there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet, while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou: but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf too becomes Monsieur de Veau in like manner: he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."—Vol. i., Chap. 4

nd hence the aversion to kill the animals we eat.* There is a contradiction between the animate and inanimate, which is felt as matter of peculiar annoyance by the more cold and congealed temperament which cannot so well pass from one to the other; but this objection is easily swallowed by the inhabitant of gayer and more luxurious regions, who is so full of life himself that he can at once impart it to all that comes in his way, or never troubles himself about the difference. So the Neapolitan bandit takes the life of his victim with little remorse, because he has enough and to spare in himself: his pulse still beats warm and vigorous, while the blood of a more humane native of the frozen North would run cold with horror at the sight of the stiffened corse, and this makes him pause before he stops in another the gushing source, of which he has such feeble supplies in himself. The wild Arab of the Desert can hardly entertain the idea of death, neither dreading it for himself nor regretting it for others. The Italians, Spaniards, and people of the South swarm alive without being sick or sorry at the circumstance: they hunt the accustomed prey in each other's tangled locks openly in the streets and on the highways, without manifesting shame or repugnance: combs are an invention of our Northern climes. Now I can comprehend this, when I look at the dirty, dingy, greasy, sun-burnt complexion of an Italian peasant or beggar, whose body seems alive all over with a sort of tingling, oily sensation, so that from any given particle of his shining skin to the beast "whose name signifies love," the transition is but small. This populousness is not unaccountable where all teems with life, where all is glowing and in motion, and every pore thrills with an exuberance of feeling. Not so in the dearth of life and spirit, in the drossy, dry, material texture, the clear complexions and fair hair of the Saxon races, where the puncture of an insect's sting is a solution of their personal identity, and the idea of life attached to and courting an intimacy with them in spite of themselves, naturally produces all the revulsions of the most violent antipathy, and nearly drives them out of their wits. How well the smooth ivory comb and

* Hence the peculiar horror of cannibalism from the stronger sympathy with our own sensations, and the greater violence that is done to it by the sacrilegious use of what once possessed human life and feeling.

auburn hair agree—while the Greek *dandy*, on entering a room, applies his hand to brush a cloud of busy stragglers from his hair like powder, and gives himself no more concern about them than about the motes dancing in the sun-beams! The dirt of the Italians is as it were baked into them, and so ingrained as to become a part of themselves, and occasion no discontinuity of their being.

I can forgive the dirt and sweat of a gipsy under a hedge, when I consider that the earth is his mother, the sun is his father. He hunts vermin for food: he is himself hunted like vermin for prey. His existence is not one of choice, but of necessity. The hungry Arab devours the raw shoulder of a horse. This again I can conceive. His feverish blood seethes it, and the virulence of his own breath carries off the disagreeableness of the smell. I do not see that the horse should be reckoned among unclean animals, according to any notions I have of the matter. The dividing of the hoof or the contrary, I should think, has not anything to do with the question. I can understand the distinction between beasts of prey and the herbivorous and domestic animals, but the horse is tame. The natural distinction between clean and unclean animals (which has been sometimes made into a religious one) I take to depend on two circumstances, viz. the claws and bristly hide, which generally, though not always, go together. One would not wish to be torn in pieces instead of making a comfortable meal, "to be supped upon" where we thought of supping. With respect to the wolf, the tiger, and other animals of the same species, it seems a question which of us should devour the other: this baulks our appetite by distracting our attention, and we have so little relish for being eaten ourselves, or for the fangs and teeth of these shocking animals, that it gives us a distaste for their whole bodies. The horror we conceive at preying upon them arises in part from the fear we had of being preyed upon by them. No such apprehension crosses the mind with respect to the deer, the sheep, the hare—"here all is conscience and tender heart." These gentle creatures (whom we compliment as useful) offer no resistance to the knife, and there is therefore nothing shocking or repulsive in the idea of devoting them to it. There is no confusion of ideas, but a beautiful simplicity and uniformity in our re-

lation to each other, we as the slayers, they as the slain. A perfect understanding subsists on the subject. The hair of animals of prey is also strong and bristly, and forms an obstacle to our Epicurean designs. The calf or fawn is sleek and smooth: the bristles on a dog's or cat's back are like "the quills upon the fretful porcupine," a very impracticable repast to the imagination, that stick in the throat and turn the stomach. Who has not read and been edified by the account of the supper of Gil Blas? Besides, there is also in all probability the practical consideration urged by Voltaire's traveller, who being asked "which he preferred—black mutton or white?" replied, "Either, provided it was tender." The greater rankness in the flesh is however accompanied by a corresponding irritability of surface, a tenaciousness, a pruriency, a soreness to attack, and not that fine, round, pampered passiveness to impressions which cuts up into handsome joints and entire pieces without any fidgetty process, and with an obvious view to solid, wholesome nourishment. Swine's flesh, the abomination of the Jewish law, certainly comes under the objection here stated; and the bear with its shaggy fur is only smuggled into the Christian larder as half-brother to the wild boar, and because from its lazy, lumpish character and appearance, it seems matter of indifference whether it eats or is eaten. The horse, with sleek round haunches, is fair game, except from custom; and I think I could survive having swallowed part of an ass's foal without being utterly loathsome to myself.* Mites in a rotten cheese are endurable, from being so small and dry that they are

* Thomas Cooper of Manchester, the able logician and political partisan, tried the experiment some years ago, when he invited a number of gentlemen and officers quartered in the town to dine with him on an ass's foal instead of a calf's-head, on the anniversary of the 30th of January. The circumstance got wind, and gave great offence. Mr. Cooper had to attend a county-meeting soon after at Boulton-le-Moors, and one of the county magistrates coming to the inn for the same purpose, and when he asked "If any one was in the room?" receiving for answer—"No one but Mr. Cooper of Manchester"—ordered out his horse and immediately rode home again. Some verses made on the occasion by Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre explained the story thus—

> "The reason how this came to pass is
> The Justice had heard that Cooper ate asses!"

scarce distinguishable from the atoms of the cheese itself, "so drossy and divisible are they:" but the Lord deliver me from their more thriving next-door neighbors! Animals that are made use of as food should either be so small as to be imperceptible, or else we should dig into the quarry of life, hew away the masses, and not leave the form standing to reproach us with our gluttony and cruelty. I hate to see a rabbit trussed, or a hare brought to table in the form which it occupied while living: they seem to me apparitions of the burrowers in the earth or the rovers in the wood, sent to scare away appetite. One reason why toads and serpents are disgusting, is from the way in which they run against or suddenly cling to the skin; the encountering them causes a solution of continuity, and we shudder to feel a life which is not ours in contact with us. It is this disjointed or imperfect sympathy which in the recoil produces the greatest antipathy. Sterne asks why a sword, which takes away life, may be named without offence, though other things, which contribute to perpetuate it, cannot? Because the idea in the one case is merely painful, and there is no mixture of the agreeable to lead the imagination on to a point from which it must make a precipitate retreat. The morally indecent arises from the doubtful conflict between temptation and duty: the physically revolting is the product of alternate attraction and repulsion, of partial adhesion, or of something that is foreign to us sticking closer to our persons than we could wish. The nastiest tastes and smells are not the most pungent and painful, but a compound of sweet and bitter, of the agreeable and disagreeable; where the sense, having been relaxed and rendered effeminate as it were by the first, is unable to contend with the last, faints and sinks under it, and has no way of relieving itself but by violently throwing off the load that oppresses it. Hence loathing and sickness. But these hardly ever arise without something contradictory or *impure* in the objects, or unless the mind, having been invited and prepared to be gratified at first, this expectation is turned to disappointment and disgust. Mere pains, mere pleasures do not have this effect, save from an excess of the first causing insensibility and then a faintness ensues, or of the last, causing what is called a surfeit. Sea-sickness has some analogy to this. It comes on with that unsettled motion of the

ship, which takes away the ordinary footing or firm hold we have of things, and by relaxing our perceptions, unbraces the whole nervous system. The giddiness and swimming of the head on looking down a precipice, when we are ready with every breath of imagination to topple down into the abyss, has its source in the same uncertain and rapid whirl of the fancy through possible extremes. Thus we find that for cases of fainting, sea-sickness, &c., a glass of brandy is recommended as "the sovereign'st thing on earth," because by grappling with the coats of the stomach and bringing our sensations to a *focus*, it does away that nauseous fluctuation and suspense of feeling which is the root of the mischief. I do not know whether I make myself intelligible, for the utmost I can pretend is to suggest some very subtle and remote analogies: but if I have at all succeeded in opening up the train of argument I intend, it will at least be possible to conceive how the sanguine Italian is less nice in his intercourse with material objects, less startled at incongruities, less liable to take offence, than the more literal and conscientious German, because the more headstrong current of his own sensations fills up the gaps and "makes the odds all even." He does not care to have his cabbages and salads washed ten times over, or his beds cleared of vermin: he can lend or borrow satisfaction from all objects indifferently. The air over his head is full of life, of the hum of insects; the grass under his feet rings and is loud with the cry of the grasshopper; innumerable green lizards dart from the rocks and sport before him: what signifies it if any living creature approaches nearer his own person, where all is one vital glow? The Indian even twines the forked serpent round his hand unharmed, copper-colored like it, his veins as heated; and the Brahmin cherishes life and disregards his own person as an act of his religion—the religion of fire and of the sun! Yet how shall we reconcile to this theory the constant ablutions (five times a day) of the Eastern nations, and the squalid customs of some Northern people, the dirtiness of the Russians and of the Scotch? Superstition may perhaps account for the one, and poverty and barbarism for the other.*

* What a plague Moses had with his Jews to make them "reform and live cleanly!" To this day (according to a learned traveller) the Jews,

Laziness has a great deal to do in the question, and this again is owing to a state of feeling sufficient to itself, and rich in enjoyment without the help of action. Clothilde (the finest and darkest of the Gensano girls) fixes herself at her door about noon (when her day's work is done): her smile reflects back the brightness of the sun. she darts upon a little girl with a child in her arms, nearly overturns both, devours it with kisses, and then resumes her position at the door, with her hands behind her back and her shoes down at heel. This slatternliness and negligence is the more remarkable in so fine a girl, and one whose ordinary costume is a gorgeous picture, but it is a part of the character; her dress would never have been so rich, if she could take more pains about it—they have no nervous or fidgetty feeling whether a thing is coming off or not: all their sensations, as it were, sit loose upon them. Their clothes are no part of themselves,—they even fling their limbs about as if they scarcely belonged to them; the heat in summer requires the utmost freedom and airiness (which becomes a habit), and they have nothing tight-bound or strait-laced about their minds or bodies. The same girl in winter (for "dull, cold winter *does* inhabit here" also) would have a *scaldaletto* (an earthen pan with coals in it) dangling at her wrists for four months together, without any sense of incumbrance or distraction, or any other feeling but of the heat it communicated to her hands. She does not mind its chilling the rest of her body or disfiguring her hands, making her fingers look like "long purples"—these children of nature "take the good the Gods provide them," and trouble themselves little about consequences or appearances. Their self-will is much stronger than their vanity—they have as little curiosity about others as concern for their good opinion. Two Italian peasants talking by the roadside will not so much as turn their heads to look at an English carriage that is passing. They have no interest except in what is personal, sensual. Hence they have as little tenaciousness on the score of property as in the acquisition of ideas. They want neither. Their good spirits are

wherever scattered, have an aversion to agriculture and almost to its products; and a Jewish girl will refuse to accept a flower—if you offer her a piece of money, of jewellery or embroidery, she knows well enough what to make of the proffered courtesy. See *Hacquet's Travels in Carpathia, &c*

food, clothing, and books to them. They are fond of comfort too, but their notion of it differs from ours—ours consists in accumulating the means of enjoyment, theirs in being free to enjoy, in the dear *far niente*. What need have they to encumber themselves with furniture or wealth or business, when all they require (for the most part) is air, a bunch of grapes, bread, and stone-walls? The Italians, generally speaking, have nothing, do nothing, want nothing,—to the surprise of foreigners, who ask how they live? The men are too lazy to be thieves, the women to be something else. The dependence of the Swiss and English on their comforts, that is, on all "appliances and means to boot," as helps to enjoyment or hindrances to annoyance, makes them not only eager to procure different objects of accommodation and luxury, but makes them take such pains in their preservation and embellishment, and *pet* them so when acquired. "A man," says Yorick, "finds an apple, spits upon it, and calls it his." The more any one finds himself clinging to material objects for existence or gratification, the more he will take a personal interest in them, and the more will he clean, repair, polish, scrub, scour, and tug at them without end, as if it were his own soul that he was keeping clear from spot or blemish. A Swiss dairy-maid scours the very heart out of a wooden pail; a scullion washes the taste as well as the worms out of a dish of brocoli. The wenches are in like manner neat and clean in their own persons, but insipid. The most coarse and ordinary furniture in Switzerland has more pains bestowed upon it to keep it in order, than the finest works of art in Italy. There the pictures are suffered to moulder on the walls; and the Claudes in the Doria Palace at Rome are black with age and dirt. We set more store by them in England, where we have scarce any other sunshine! At the common inns on this side the Simplon, the very sheets have a character for whiteness to lose; the rods and testers of the beds are like a peeled wand. On the opposite side you are thankful when you are not shown into an apartment resembling a three-stalled stable, with horse-cloths for coverlids to hide the dirt, and beds of horse-hair or withered leaves as harborage for vermin. The more, the merrier; the dirtier, the warmer; live and let live, seem maxims inculcated by the climate. Wherever things are not kept carefully

apart from foreign admixtures and contamination, the distinctions of property itself will not, I conceive, be held exceedingly sacred. This feeling is strong as the passions are weak. A people that are remarkable for cleanliness, will be so for industry, for honesty, for avarice, and *vice versâ*. The Italians cheat, steal, rob (when they think it worth their while to do so) with licensed impunity: the Swiss, who feel the value of property, and labor incessantly to acquire it, are afraid to lose it. At Brigg I first heard the cry of watchmen at night, which I had not heard for many months. I was reminded of the traveller who after wandering in remote countries saw a gallows near at hand, and knew by this circumstance that he approached the confines of civilisation. The police in Italy is both secret and severe, but it is directed chiefly to political and not to civil matters. Patriot sighs are heaved unheard in the dungeons of St. Angelo: the Neapolitan bandit breathes the free air of his native mountains!

It may by this time be conjectured why Catholics are less cleanly than Protestants, because in fact they are less scrupulous, and swallow whatever is set before them in matters of faith as well as other things. Protestants, as such, are captious and scrutinizing, try to pick holes and find fault,—have a dry, meagre, penurious imagination. Catholics are buoyed up over doubts and difficulties by a greater redundance of fancy, and make religion subservient to a sense of enjoyment. The one are for detecting and weeding out all corruptions and abuses in doctrine or worship: the others enrich theirs with the dust and cobwebs of antiquity, and think their ritual none the worse for the tarnish of age. Those of the Catholic Communion are willing to take it for granted that everything is right; the professors of the Reformed religion have a pleasure in believing that everything is wrong, in order that they may have to set it right. In morals, again, Protestants are more precise than their Catholic brethren. The creed of the latter absolves them of half their duties, of all those that are a clog on their inclinations, atones for all slips, and patches up all deficiencies. But though this may make them less censorious and sour, I am not sure that it renders them less in earnest in the part they do perform. When more is left to freedom of choice, perhaps the service that is voluntary will be purer and more

effectual. That which is not so may as well be done by proxy; or if it does not come from the heart, may be suffered to exhale merely from the lips. If less is owing in this case to a dread of vice and fear of shame, more will proceed from a love of virtue, free from the least sinister construction. It is asserted that Italian women are more gross; I can believe it, and that they are at the same time more refined than others. Their religion is in the same manner more sensual: but is it not to the full as visionary and imaginative as any? I have heard Italian women say things that others would not—it does not therefore follow that they would do them: partly because the knowledge of vice that makes it familiar renders it indifferent; and because the same masculine tone of thinking that enables them to confront vice, may raise them above it into a higher sphere of sentiment. If their senses are more inflammable, their passions (and their love of virtue and of religion among the rest) may glow with proportionable ardor. Indeed the truest virtue is that which is least susceptible of contamination from its opposite. I may admire a Raphael, and yet not swoon at sight of a daub. Why should there not be the same taste in morals as in pictures or poems? Granting that vice has more votaries here, at least it has fewer mercenary ones, and this is no trifling advantage. As to manners, the Catholics must be allowed to carry it over all the world. The better sort not only say nothing to give you pain; they say nothing of others that it would give them pain to hear repeated. Scandal and tittle-tattle are long banished from good society. After all, to be wise is to be humane. What would our English *blue-stockings* say to this? The fault and the excellence of Italian society is, that the shocking or disagreeable is not supposed to have an existence in the nature of things.*

* The dirt and comparative want of conveniences among Catholics is often attributed to the number of their Saints' days and festivals, which divert them from labor, and give them an idle and disorderly turn of mind.

ESSAY X.

On thought and action.

Those persons who are much accustomed to abstract contemplation are generally unfitted for active pursuits and *vice versâ*. I myself am sufficiently decided and dogmatical in my opinions, and yet in action I am as imbecile as a woman or a child. I cannot set about the most indifferent thing without twenty efforts, and had rather write one of these Essays than have to seal a letter. In trying to throw a hat or a book upon a table I miss it; it just reaches the edge and falls back again, and instead of doing what I mean to perform, I do what I intend to avoid. Thought depends on the habitual exercise of the speculative faculties; action on the determination of the will. The one assigns reasons for things, the other puts causes into act. Abraham Tucker relates of a friend of his, an old special pleader, that once coming out of his chambers in the Temple with him to take a walk, he hesitated at the bottom of the stairs which way to go—proposed different directions, to Charing-Cross, to St. Paul's—found some objection to them all, and at last turned back for want of a casting motive to incline the scale. Tucker gives this as an instance of professional indecision, or of that temper of mind which having been long used to weigh the reasons for things with scrupulous exactness, could not come to any conclusion at all on the spur of the occasion, or without some grave distinction to justify its choice. Louvet, in his Narrative, tells us, that when several of the Brissotin party were collected at the house of Barbaroux (I think it was) ready to effect their escape from the power of Robespierre, one of them going to the window and finding a shower of rain coming on, seriously advised their stopping till the next morning, for that the emissaries of government would not think of coming in search of them in such bad weather. Some of them deliberated on this wise proposal, and

were nearly taken. Such is the effeminacy of the speculative and philosophical temperament, compared with the promptness and vigor of the practical! It is on such unequal terms that the refined and romantic speculators on possible good and evil contend with their strong-nerved, remorseless adversaries, and we see the result. Reasoners in general are undecided, wavering, and sceptical, or yield at last to the weakest motive, as most congenial to their feeble habit of soul.*

Some men are mere machines. They are put in a go-cart of business, and are harnessed to a profession—yoked to fortune's wheels. They plod on, and succeed. Their affairs conduct them, not they their affairs. All they have to do is to let things take their course, and not go out of the beaten road. A man may carry on the business of farming on the same spot and principle that his ancestors have done for many generations before him without any extraordinary share of capacity: the proof is, it is done every day in every county and parish in the kingdom. All that is necessary is that he should not pretend to be wiser than his neighbors. If he has a grain more wit or penetration than they, if his vanity gets the start of his avarice only half a neck, if he has ever thought or read anything upon the subject, it will most probably be the ruin of him. He will turn theoretical or experimental farmer, and no more need be said. Mr. Cobbett, who is a sufficiently shrewd and practical man, with an eye also to the main chance, had got some notions in his head (from Tull's Husbandry) about the method of sowing turnips, to which he would have sacrificed not only his estate at Botley, but his native county of Hampshire itself, sooner than give up an inch of his argument. "Tut! will you baulk a man in the career of his humor?" Therefore, that a man may not be ruined by his humors, he should be too dull and phlegmatic to have any: he must have "no figures nor no fantasies which busy

* When Bonaparte left the Chamber of Deputies to go and fight his last fatal battle, he advised them not to be debating the forms of Constitutions when the enemy was at their gates. Benjamin Constant thought otherwise. He wanted to play a game at *cat's-cradle* between the Republicans and Royalists, and lost his catch. He did not care, so that he ham pered a more efficient man than himself.

thought draws in the brains of men." The fact is, that the ingenuity or judgment of no one man is equal to that of the world at large, which is the fruit of the experience and ability of all mankind. Even where a man is right in a particular notion, he will be apt to over-rate the importance of his discovery, to the detriment of his affairs. Action requires co-operation, but n general if you set your face against custom, people will set their faces against you. They cannot tell whether you are right or wrong, but they know that you are guilty of a pragmatical assumption of superiority over them, which they do not like. There is no doubt that if a person two hundred years ago had foreseen and attempted to put in practice the most approved and successful methods of cultivation now in use, it would have been a death-blow to his credit and fortune. So that though the experiments and improvements of private individuals from time to time gradually go to enrich the public stock of information and reform the general practice, they are mostly the ruin of the person who makes them, because he takes a part for the whole, and lays more stress upon the single point in which he has found others in the wrong, than on all the rest in which they are substantially and prescriptively in the right. The great requisite, it should appear then, for the prosperous management of ordinary business, is the want of imagination, or of any ideas but those of custom and interest on the narrowest scale :—and as the affairs of the world are necessarily carried on by the common run of its inhabitants, it seems a wise dispensation of Providence that it should be so. If no one could rent a piece of glebe-land without a genius for mechanical inventions, or stand behind a counter without a large benevolence of soul, what would become of the commercial and agricu tural interest of this great (and once flourishing) country ? I would not be understood as saying tha• there is not what may be called *a genius for business*, an extra ordinary capacity for affairs, quickness and comprehension united, an insight into character, an acquaintance with a number of particular circumstances, a variety of expedients, a tact for finding out what will do: I grant all this (in Liverpool and Manchester they would persuade you that your merchant and manufacturer is your only gentleman and scholar)—but still, making every

allowance for the difference between the liberal trader and the sneaking shop-keeper, I doubt whether the most surprising success is to be accounted for from any such unusual attainments, or whether a man's making half a million of money is a proof of his capacity for thought in general. It is much oftener owing to views and wishes bounded but constantly directed to one particular object. To succeed, a man should aim only at success. The child of Fortune should resign himself into the hands of Fortune. A plotting head frequently overreaches itself: a mind confident of its resources and calculating powers enters on critical speculations, which, in a game depending so much on chance and unforeseen events, and not entirely on intellectual skill, turn the odds greatly against any one in the long run. The rule of business is to take what you can get, and keep what you have got: or an eagerness in seizing every opportunity that offers for promoting your own interest, and a plodding persevering industry in making the most of the advantages you have already obtained, are the most effectual as well as safest ingredients in the composition of the mercantile character. The world is a book in which the *Chapter of Accidents* is none of the least considerable; or it is a machine that must be left, in a great measure, to turn itself. The most that a worldly-minded man can do is, to stand at the receipt of custom, and be constantly on the look-out for windfalls. The true devotee in this way waits for the revelations of Fortune as the poet waits for the inspiration of the Muse, and does not rashly anticipate her favors. He must be neither capricious nor wilful. I have known people untrammelled in the ways of business, but with so intense an apprehension of their own interest, that they would grasp at the slightest possibility of gain as a certainty, and were led into as many mistakes by an over-griping usurious disposition as they could have been by the most thoughtless extravagance.—We hear a great outcry about the want of judgment in men of genius. It is not a want of judgment, but an excess of other things. They err knowingly, and are wilfully blind. The understanding is out of the question. The profound judgment which soberer people pique themselves upon is in truth a want of passion and imagination. Give them an interest in anything, a sudden fancy, a bait

for their favorite foible, and who so besotted as they? Stir their feelings, and farewell to their prudence! The understanding operates as a motive to action only in the silence of the passions. I have heard people of a sanguine temperament reproached with betting according to their wishes, instead of their opinion who should win: and I have seen those who reproached them do the very same thing the instant their own vanity or prejudices were concerned. The most mechanical people, once thrown off their balance, are the most extravagant and fantastical. What passion is there so unmeaning and irrational as avarice itself? The Dutch went mad for tulips, and —— —— for love!—To return to what was said a little way back, a question might be started, whether, as thought relates to the whole circumference of things and interests, and business is confined to a very small part of them, *viz.* to a knowledge of a man's own affairs and the making of his own fortune, whether a talent for the latter will not generally exist in proportion to the narrowness and grossness of his ideas, nothing drawing his attention out of his own sphere, or giving him an interest except in those things which he can realize and bring home to himself in the most undoubted shape? To the man of business all the world is a fable but the Stock-Exchange: to the money-getter nothing has a real existence that he cannot convert into a tangible feeling, that he does not recognize as property, that he cannot "measure with a two-foot rule or count upon ten fingers." The want of thought, of imagination, drives the practical man upon immediate realities: to the poet or philosopher all is real and interesting that is true or possible, that can reach in its consequences to others, or be made a subject of curious speculation to himself!

But is it right, then, to judge of action by the quantity of thought implied in it, any more than it would be to condemn a life of contemplation for being inactive? Or has not everything a source and principle of its own, to which we should refer it, and not to the principles of other things? He who succeeds in any pursuit in which others fail, may be presumed to have qualities of some sort or other which they are without. If he has not brilliant wit, he may have solid sense; if he has not subtlety of understanding, he may have energy and firmness of purpose,

if he has only a few advantages, he may have modesty and prudence to make the most of what he possesses. Propriety is one great matter in the conduct of life; which, though like a graceful carriage of the body, it is neither definable nor striking at first sight, is the result of finely balanced feelings, and lends a secret strength and charm to the whole character.

> ——*Quicquid agit, quoquo vestigia vertit,*
> *Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.*

There are more ways than one in which the various faculties of the mind may unfold themselves. Neither words, nor ideas reducible to words, constitute the utmost limit of human capacity. Man is not a merely talking nor a merely reasoning animal. Let us then take him as he is, instead of "curtailing him of nature's fair proportions" to suit our previous notions. Doubtless, there are great characters both in active and contemplative life. There have been heroes as well as sages, legislators and founders of religion, historians and able statesmen and generals, inventors of useful arts and instruments, and explorers of undiscovered countries, as well as writers and readers of books. It will not do to set all these aside under any fastidious or pedantic distinction. Comparisons are odious, because they are impertinent, and lead only to the discovery of defects by making one thing the standard of another which has no relation to it. If, as some one proposed, we were to institute an inquiry, "Which was the greatest man, Milton or Cromwell, Bonaparte or Rubens?"—we should have all the authors and artists on one side, and all the military men and the whole diplomatic body on the other, who would set to work with all their might to pull in pieces the idol of the other party; and the longer the dispute continued, the more would each grow dissatisfied with his favorite, though determined to allow no merit to any one else. The mind is not well competent to take in the full impression of more than one style of excellence or one extraordinary character at once; contradictory claims puzzle and stupefy it; and however admirable any individual may be in himself, and unrivalled in his particular way, yet if we try him by others in a totally opposite class, that is, if we consider not what he was but what he was not, he will be found to be

nothing. We do not reckon up the excellences on either side, for then these would satisfy the mind and put an end to the comparison: we have no way of exclusively setting up our favorite but by running down his supposed rival; and for the gorgeous hues of Rubens, the lofty conceptions of Milton, the deep policy and cautious daring of Cromwell, or the dazzling exploits and fatal ambition of the modern chieftain, the poet is transformed into a pedant, the artist sinks into a mechanic, the politician turns out no better than a knave, and the hero is exalted into a madman. It is as easy to get the start of our antagonist in argument by frivolous and vexatious objections to one side of the question, as it is difficult to do full and heaped justice to the other. If I am asked which is the greatest of those who have been the greatest in different ways, I answer the one that we happen to be thinking of at the time, for while that is the case, we can conceive of nothing higher. If there is a propensity in the vulgar to admire the achievements of personal prowess or instances of fortunate enterprise too much, it cannot be denied that those who have to weigh out and dispense the meed of fame in books, have been too much disposed, by a natural bias, to confine all merit and talent to the productions of the pen, or at least to those works which, being artificial or abstract representations of things, are transmitted to posterity, and cried up as models in their kind. This, though unavoidable, is hardly just. Actions pass away and are forgotten, or are only discernible in their effects: conquerors, statesmen, and kings live by their names stamped on the page of history. Hume says rightly that more people think about Virgil and Homer (and that continually) than ever trouble their heads about Cæsar or Alexander. In fact, poets are a longer-lived race than heroes: they breathe more of the air of immortality. They survive more entire in their thoughts and acts. We have all that Virgil or Homer did, as much as if we had lived at the same time with them: we can hold their works in our hands, or lay them on our pillows, or put them to our lips. Scarcely a trace of what the others did is left upon the earth, so as to be visible to common eyes. The one, the dead authors, are living men, still breathing and moving in their writings. The others, the conquerors of the world, are but the ashes in an urn. The sympa-

thy (so to speak) between thought and thought is more intimate and vital than that between thought and action. Thought is linked to thought as flame kindles into flame: the tribute of admiration to the *manes* of departed heroism is like burning incense in a marble monument. Words, ideas, feelings, with the progress of time harden into substances: things, bodies, actions, moulder away, or melt into a sound, into thin air! Yet though the Schoolmen in the middle ages disputed more about the texts of Aristotle than the battle of Arbela, perhaps Alexander's Generals in his life-time admired his pupil as much, and liked him better. For not only a man's actions are effaced and vanish with him; his virtuous and generous qualities die with him also:—his intellect only is immortal, and bequeathed unimpaired to posterity. Words are the only things that last for ever.

If however the empire of words and general knowledge is more durable in proportion as it is abstracted and attenuated, it is less immediate and dazzling: if authors are as good after they are dead as when they were living, while living they might as well be dead: and moreover with respect to actual ability, to write a book is not the only proof of taste, sense, or spirit, as pedants would have us suppose. To do anything well, to paint a picture, to fight a battle, to make a plough or a threshing-machine, requires, one would think, as much skill and judgment as to talk about or write a description of it when done. Words are universal, intelligible signs, but they are not the only real, existing things. Did not Julius Cæsar show himself as much of a man in conducting his campaigns as in composing his Commentaries? Or was the Retreat of the Ten Thousand under Xenophon, or his work of that name, the most consummate performance? Or would not Lovelace, supposing him to have existed and to have conceived and executed all his fine stratagems on the spur of the occasion, have been as clever a fellow as Richardson, who invented them in cold blood? If to conceive and describe an heroic character is the height of a literary ambition, we can hardly make it out that to be and to do all that the wit of man can feign, is nothing. To use means to ends, to set causes in motion, to wield the machine of society, to subject the wills of others to your own, to manage abler men than yourself by means of that which is stron-

ger in them than their wisdom, *viz.* their weakness and their folly, to calculate the resistance of ignorance and prejudice to your designs, and by obviating to turn them to account, to foresee a long, obscure, and complicated train of events, of chances and openings of success, to unwind the web of others' policy, and weave your own out of it, to judge of the effects of things not in the abstract but with reference to all their bearings, ramifications and impediments, to understand character thoroughly, to see latent talent or lurking treachery, to know mankind for what they are, and use them as they deserve, to have a purpose steadily in view and to effect it after removing every obstacle, to master others and be true to yourself, asks power and knowledge, both nerves and brain.

Such is the sort of talent that may be shown, and that has been possessed by the great leaders on the stage of the world. To accomplish great things argues, I imagine, great resolution: to design great things implies no common mind. Ambition is in some sort genius. Though I would rather wear out my life in arguing a broad speculative question than in caballing for the election to a wardmote, or canvassing for votes in a rotten borough, yet I should think that the loftiest Epicurean philosopher might descend from his punctilio to identify himself with the support of a great principle, or to prop a falling state. This is what the legislators and founders of empire did of old; and the permanence of their institutions showed the depth of the principles from which they emanated. A tragic poem is not the worse for acting well: if it will not bear this test, it savors of effeminacy. Well-digested schemes will stand the touchstone of experience. Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts. Again, great acts grow out of great occasions, and great occasions spring from great principles, working changes in society, and tearing it up by the roots. But still I conceive that a genius for action depends essentially on the strength of the will rather than on that of the understanding; that the long-headed calculation of causes and consequences arises from the energy of the first cause, which is the will, setting others in motion and prepared to anticipate the results; that its sagacity is activity delighting in meeting difficulties and adventures more than half way, and its wisdom cour-

age not to shrink from danger, but to redouble its efforts with opposition. Its humanity, if it has much, is magnanimity to spare the vanquished, exulting in power but not prone to mischief, with good sense enough to be aware of the instability of fortune, and with some regard to reputation. What may serve as a criterion to try this question by is the following consideration, that we sometimes find as remarkable a deficiency of the speculative faculty coupled with great strength of will and consequent success in active life, as we do a want of voluntary power and total incapacity for business, frequently joined to the highest mental qualifications. In some cases it will happen that "to be wise, is to be obstinate." If you are deaf to reason but stick to your own purposes, you will tire others out, and bring them over to your way of thinking. Self-will and blind prejudice are the best defence of actual power and exclusive advantages. The forehead of the late king was not remarkable for the character of intellect, but the lower part of his face was expressive of strong passions and fixed resolution. Charles Fox had an animated, intelligent eye, and brilliant, elastic forehead (with a nose indicating fine taste), but the lower features were weak, unsettled, fluctuating, and without *purchase*—it was in them the Whigs were defeated. What a fine iron binding Bonaparte had round his face, as if it had been cased in steel! What sensibility about the mouth! What watchful penetration in the eye! What a smooth, unruffled forehead! Mr. Pitt, with little sunken eyes, had a high, retreating forehead, and a nose expressing pride and aspiring self-opinion: it was on that (with submission) that he suspended the decision of the House of Commons, and dangled the Opposition as he pleased. Lord Castlereagh is a man rather deficient than redundant in words and topics. He is not (any more than St. Augustine was, in the opinion of La Fontaine) so great a wit as Rabelais, nor is he so great a philosopher as Aristotle: but he has that in him which is not to be trifled with. He has a noble mask of a face (not well filled up in the expression, which is relaxed and dormant), with a fine person and manner. On the strength of these he hazards his speeches in the House. He has also a knowledge of mankind, and of the composition of the House. He takes a thrust which he cannot parry on his shield—is, "all

tranquillity and smiles" under a volley of abuse, sees when to pay a compliment to a wavering antagonist, soothes the melting mood of his hearers, or gets up a speech full of indignation, and knows how to bestow his attentions on that great public body, whether he wheedles or bullies, so as to bring it to compliance. With a long reach of undefined purposes (the result of a temper too indolent for thought, too violent for repose) he has equal perseverance and pliancy in bringing his objects to pass. I would rather be Lord Castlereagh, as far as a sense of power is concerned (principle is out of the question), than such a man as Mr. Canning, who is a mere fluent sophist, and never knows the limits of discretion, or the effect which will be produced by what he says, except as far as florid common-places may be depended on. Bonaparte is referred by Mr. Coleridge to the class of active rather than of intellectual characters: and Cowley has left an invidious but splendid eulogy on Oliver Cromwell, which sets out on much the same principle. "What," he says, "can be more extraordinary, than that a person of mean birth, no fortune, no eminent qualities of body, which have sometimes, or of mind, which have often raised men to the highest dignities, should have the courage to attempt, and the happiness to succeed in, so improbable a design, as the destruction of one of the most ancient and most solidly-founded monarchies upon the earth? That he should have the power or boldness to put his prince and master to an open and infamous death; to banish that numerous and strongly-allied family; to do all this under the name and wages of a Parliament; to trample upon them too as he pleased, and spurn them out of door when he grew weary of them; to raise up a new and unheard-of monster out of their ashes; to stifle that in the very infancy, and set up himself above all things that ever were called sovereign in England; to oppress all his enemies by arms, and all his friends afterwards by artifice; to serve all parties patiently for a while, and to command them victoriously at last; to over-run each corner of the three nations, and overcome with equal facility both the riches of the south and the poverty of the north; to be feared and courted by all foreign princes, and adopted a brother to the Gods of the earth; to call together Parliaments with a word of his pen, and scatter them

again with the breath of his mouth ; to be humbly and daily petitioned that he would please to be hired, at the rate of two millions a year, to be the master of those who had hired him before to be their servant ; to have the estates and lives of three kingdoms as much at his disposal, as was the little inheritance of his father, and to be as noble and liberal in the spending of them ; and lastly (for there is no end of all the particulars of his glory) to bequeath all this with one word to his posterity ; to die with peace at home. and triumph abroad ; to be buried among kings, and with more than regal solemnity ; and to leave a name behind him, not to be extinguished but with the whole world ; which as it is now too little for his praises, so might have been too [narrow] for his conquests, if the short line of his human life could have been stretched out to the extent of his immortal designs !"

Cromwell was a bad speaker and a worse writer. Milton wrote his dispatches for him in elegant and erudite Latin : and the pen of the one, like the sword of the other, was "sharp and sweet." We have not that union in modern times of the heroic and literary character which was common among the ancients. Julius Cæsar and Xenophon recorded their own acts with equal clearness of style and modesty of temper. The Duke of Wellington (worse off than Cromwell) is obliged to get Mr. Mudford to write the History of his Life. Sophocles, Æschylus, and Socrates, were distinguished for their military prowess among their contemporaries, though now only remembered for what they did in poetry and philosophy. Cicero and Demosthenes, the two greatest orators of antiquity, appear to have been cowards : nor does Horace seem to give a very favorable picture of his martial achievements. But in general there was not that division in the labors of the mind and body among the Greeks and Romans that has been introduced among us either by the progress of civilisation or by a greater slowness and inaptitude of parts. The French, for instance, appear to unite a number of accomplishments, the literary character and the man of the world, better than we do. Among us a scholar is almost another name for a pedant or a clown : it is not so with them. Their philosophers and wits went into the world, and mingled in the society of the fair Of this there needs no other proof than the spirited print

of most of the great names in French literature, to whom Molière is reading a comedy in the presence of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos. D'Alembert, one of the first mathematicians of his age, was a wit, a man of gallantry and letters. With us a learned man is absorbed in himself and some particular study, and minds nothing else. There is something ascetic and impracticable in his very constitution, and he answers to the description of the Monk in Spenser—

> "From every work he challenged essoin
> For contemplation's sake"——

Perhaps the superior importance attached to the institutions of religion, as well as the more abstracted and visionary nature of its objects, has led (as a general result) to a wider separation between thought and action in modern times. Ambition is of a higher and more heroic strain than avarice. Its objects are nobler, and the means by which it attains its ends less mechanical.

> "Better be lord of them that riches have,
> Than riches have myself, and be their servile slave."

The incentive to ambition is the love of power; the spur to avarice is either the fear of poverty, or a strong desire of self-indulgence. The amassers of fortunes seem divided into two opposite classes, lean, penurious-looking mortals, or jolly fellows who are determined to get possession of, because they want to enjoy the good things of the world. The one have famine and a work-house always before their eyes; the others, in the fullness of their persons and the robustness of their constitutions, seem to bespeak the reversion of a landed estate, rich acres, fat beeves, a substantial mansion, costly clothing, a chine and turkey, choice wines, and all other good things consonant to the wants and full-fed desires of their bodies. Such men charm fortune by the sleekness of their aspects and the goodly rotundity of their honest faces, as the others scare away poverty by their wan, meagre looks. The last starve themselves into riches by care and carking: the first eat, drink, and sleep their way into the good things

of this life. The greatest number of *warm* men in the city are good, jolly fellows. Look at Sir William ———, Callipash and callipee are written in his face: he rolls about his unwieldy bulk in a sea of turtle-soup. How many haunches of venison does he carry on his back! He is larded with jobs and contracts; he is stuffed and swelled out with layers of bank-notes, and invitations to dinner! His face hangs out a flag of defiance to mischance: the roguish twinkle in his eye with which he lures half the city and beats Alderman ——— hollow, is a smile reflected from heaps of unsunned gold! Nature and Fortune are not so much at variance as to differ about this fellow. To enjoy the goods the Gods provide us, is to deserve it. Nature meant him for a Knight, Alderman, and City-Member; and Fortune laughed to see the goodly person and prospects of the man!* I am not, from certain early prejudices, much given to admire the ostentatious marks of wealth (there are persons enough to

* A thorough fitness for any end implies the means. Where there is a will, there is a way. A real passion, an entire devotion to any object always succeeds. The strong sympathy with what we wish and imagine, realizes it, dissipates all obstacles, and removes all scruples. The disappointed lover may complain as much as he pleases. He was himself to blame. He was a half-witted, *wishy-washy* fellow. His love might be as great as he makes it out: but it was not his ruling passion. His fear, his pride, his vanity was greater. Let any one's whole soul be steeped in this passion, let him think and care for nothing else, let nothing divert, cool, or intimidate him, let the *ideal* feeling become an actual one and take possession of his whole faculties, looks and manner, let the same voluptuous hopes and wishes govern his actions in the presence of his mistress that haunt his fancy in her absence, and I will answer for his success. But I will not answer for the success of "a dish of skimmed milk" in such a case. I could always get to see a fine collection of pictures myself. The fact is, I was set upon it. Neither the surliness of porters, nor the impertinence of footmen could keep me back. I had a portrait of Titian in my eye, and nothing could put me out in my determination. If that had not (as it were) been looking on me all the time I was battling my way, I should have been irritated or disconcerted, and gone away. But my liking to the end conquered my scruples or aversion to the means. I never understood the Scotch character but on these occasions. I would not take "No" for an answer. If I had wanted a place under government, or a writership to India, I could have got it from the same importunity, and on the same terms.

admire them without me)—but I confess, there is something in the look of the old banking-houses in Lombard-street, the posterns covered with mud, the doors opening sullenly and silently, the absence of all pretence, the darkness and the gloom within, the gleaming of lamps in the day-time,

"Like a faint shadow of uncertain light,"

that almost realizes the poetical conception of the cave of Mammon in Spenser, where dust and cobwebs concealed the roofs and pillars of solid gold, and lifts the mind quite off its ordinary hinges. The account of the manner in which the founder of Guy's Hospital accumulated his immense wealth has always to me something romantic in it, from the same force of contrast. He was a little shop-keeper, and out of his savings bought Bibles, and purchased seamen's tickets in Queen Anne's wars, by which he left a fortune of two hundred thousand pounds. The story suggests the idea of a magician; nor is there anything in the Arabian Nights that looks more like a fiction.

ESSAY XI.

On a portrait of an English lady, by Vandyke.

The portrait I speak of is in the Louvre, where it is numbered 416, and the only account of it in the *Catalogue* is that of a *Lady and her daughter*. It is companion to another whole-length by the same artist, No. 417, of a *Gentleman and a little girl*. Both are evidently English.

The face of the lady has nothing very remarkable in it, but that it may be said to be the very perfection of the English female face. It is not particularly beautiful, but there is a sweetness in it, and a goodness conjoined, which is inexpressibly delightful. The smooth ivory forehead is a little ruffled, as if some slight cause of uneasiness, like a cloud, had just passed over it. The eyes are raised with a look of timid attention; the mouth is compressed with modest sensibility; the complexion is delicate and clear; and over the whole figure (which is seated) there reign the utmost propriety and decorum. The habitual gentleness of the character seems to have been dashed with some anxious thought or momentary disquiet, and, like the shrinking flower, in whose leaves the lucid drop yet trembles, looks out and smiles at the storm that is overblown. A mother's tenderness, a mother's fear, appears to flutter on the surface, and on the extreme verge of the expression, and not to have quite subsided into thoughtless indifference or mild composure. There is a reflection of the same expression in the little child at her knee, who turns her head round with a certain appearance of constraint and innocent wonder; and perhaps it is the difficulty of getting her to sit (or to sit still) that has caused the transient contraction of her mother's brow,—that lovely, unstained mirror of pure affection, too fair, too delicate, too soft and feminine for the breath of serious misfortune ever to come near, or not to crush it. It is

a face, in short, of the greatest purity and sensibility, sweetness and simplicity, or such as Chaucer might have described

"Where all is conscience and tender heart."

I have said that it is an English face; and I may add (without being invidious) that it is not a French one. I will not say that they have no face to equal this; of that I am not a judge; but I am sure they have no face equal to this, in the qualities by which it is distinguished. They may have faces as amiable, but then the possessors of them will be conscious of it. There may be equal elegance, but not the same ease; there may be even greater intelligence, but without the innocence; more vivacity, but then it will run into petulance or coquetry; in short, there may be every other good quality but a total absence of all pretension to or wish to make a display of it, but the same unaffected modesty and simplicity. In French faces (and I have seen some that were charming both for the features and expression) there is a varnish of insincerity, a something theatrical or meretricious; but here, every particle is pure to the "last recesses of the mind." The face (such as it is, and it has a considerable share both of beauty and meaning) is without the smallest alloy of affectation. There is no false glitter in the eyes to make them look brighter: no little wrinkles about the corners of the eyelids, the effect of self-conceit; no pursing up of the mouth, no significant leer, no primness, no extravagance, no assumed levity or gravity. You have the genuine text of nature without gloss or comment. There is no heightening of conscious charms to produce greater effect, no studying of airs and graces in the glass of vanity. You have not the remotest hint of the milliner, the dancing-master, the dealer in paints and patches. You have before you a real English lady of the seventeenth century, who looks like one, because she cannot look otherwise; whose expression of sweetness, intelligence, or concern is just what is natural to her, and what the occasion requires; whose entire demeanor is the emanation of her habitual sentiments and disposition, and who is as free from guile or affectation as the little child by her side. I repeat that this is not the distinguishing

character of the French physiognomy, which, at its best, is often spoiled by a consciousness of what it is, and a restless desire to be something more.

Goodness of disposition, with a clear complexion and handsome features, is the chief ingredient in English beauty. There is a great difference in this respect between Vandyke's portraits of women and Titian's, of which we may find examples in the Louvre. The picture, which goes by the name of his *Mistress*, is one of the most celebrated of the latter. The neck of this picture is like a broad crystal mirror; and the hair which she holds so carelessly in her hand is like meshes of beaten gold. The eyes which roll in their ample sockets, like two shining orbs, and which are turned away from the spectator, only dart their glances the more powerfully into the soul; and the whole picture is a paragon of frank cordial grace, and transparent brilliancy of coloring. Her tight boddice compresses her full but finely proportioned waist; while the tucker in part conceals and almost clasps the snowy bosom. But you never think of anything beyond the personal attractions, and a certain sparkling intelligence. She is not marble, but a fine piece of animated clay. There is none of that retired and shrinking character, that modesty of demeanor, that sensitive delicacy, that starts even at the shadow of evil—that are so evidently to be traced in the portrait by Vandyke. Still there is no positive vice, no meanness, no hypocrisy, but an unconstrained elastic spirit of self-enjoyment, more bent on the end than scrupulous about the means; with firmly braced nerves, and a tincture of vulgarity. She is not like an English lady, nor like a lady at all; but she is a very fine servant-girl, conscious of her advantages, and willing to make the most of them. In fact, Titian's *Mistress* answers exactly, I conceive, to the idea conveyed by the English word, *sweetheart*.—The Marchioness of Guasto is a fairer comparison. She is by the supposition a lady, but still an Italian one. There is a honeyed richness about the texture of the skin, and her air is languid from a sense of pleasure. Her dress, though modest, has the marks of studied coquetry about it; it touches the very limits which it dares not pass; and her eyes which are bashful and downcast,

do not seem to droop under the fear of observation, but to retire from the gaze of kindled admiration,

> —— "As if they thrill'd
> Frail hearts, yet quenched not!"

One might say, with Othello, of the hand with which she holds the globe that is offered to her acceptance ——

> —— "This hand of your's requires
> A sequester from liberty, fasting and pray'r,
> Much castigation, exercise devout;
> For here's a young and *melting* devil here,
> That commonly rebels."

The hands of Vandyke's portrait have the purity and coldness of marble. The color of the face is such as might be breathed upon it by the refreshing breeze; that of the Marchioness of Guasto's is like the glow it might imbibe from a golden sunset. The expression in the English lady springs from her duties and her affections; that of the Italian Countess inclines more to her ease and pleasures. The Marchioness of Guasto was one of three sisters, to whom, it is said, the inhabitants of Pisa proposed to pay divine honors, in the manner that beauty was worshipped by the fabulous enthusiasts of old. Her husband seems to have participated in the common infatuation, from the fanciful homage that is paid to her in this allegorical composition; and if she was at all intoxicated by the incense offered to her vanity, the painter must be allowed to have "qualified" the expression of it "very craftily."

I pass on to another female face and figure, that of the Virgin, in the beautiful picture of the *Presentation in the Temple*, by Guido. The expression here is *ideal*, and has a reference to visionary objects and feelings. It is marked by an abstraction from outward impressions, a downcast look, an elevated brow, an absorption of purpose, a stillness and resignation, that become the person and the scene in which she is engaged. The color is pale or gone; so that purified from every grossness, dead to worldly passions, she almost seems like a statue kneeling. With

knees bent, and hands uplifted, her motionless figure appears supported by a soul within, all whose thoughts, from the low ground of humility, tend heavenward. We find none of the triumphant buoyancy of health and spirit as in the *Titian's Mistress*, nor the luxurious softness of the portrait of the Marchioness of Guasto, nor the flexible, tremulous sensibility, nor the anxious attention to passing circumstances, nor the familiar look of the lady by Vandyke; on the contrary, there is a complete unity and concentration of expression, the whole is wrought up and moulded into one intense feeling, but that feeling fixed on objects remote, refined, and etheriel as the form of the fair supplicant. A still greater contrast to this internal, or as it were, *introverted* expression, is to be found in the group of female heads by the same artist, Guido, in his picture of the *Flight of Paris and Helen*. They are the three last heads on the left-hand side of the picture. They are thrown into every variety of attitude, as if to take the heart by surprise at every avenue. A tender warmth is suffused over their faces; their head-dresses are airy and fanciful, their complexion sparkling and glossy; their features seem to catch pleasure from every surrounding object, and to reflect it back again. Vanity, beauty, gaiety glance from their conscious looks and wreathed smiles, like the changing colors from the ring-dove's neck. To sharpen the effect and point the moral, they are accompanied by a little negro-boy, who holds up the train of elegance, fashion, and voluptuous grace!

Guido was the "genteelest" of painters; he was a poetical Vandyke. The latter could give, with inimitable and perfect skill, the airs and graces of people of fashion under their daily and habitual aspects, or as he might see them in a looking-glass. The former saw them in his "mind's eye," and could transform them into supposed characters and imaginary situations. Still the elements were the same. Vandyke gave them with the *mannerism* of habit and the individual details; Guido, as they were rounded into grace and smoothness by the breath of fancy, and borne along by the tide of sentiment. Guido did not want the *ideal* faculty, though he wanted strength and variety. There is an effeminacy about his pictures, for he gave only the different modifications of beauty. It was the Goddess that inspired him.

the Siren that seduced him; and whether as saint or sinner, was equally welcome to him. His creations are as frail as they are fair. They all turn on a passion for beauty, and without this support, are nothing. He could paint beauty combined with pleasure, or sweetness, or grief, or devotion; but unless it were the ground-work and the primary condition of his performance, he became insipid, ridiculous, and extravagant. There is one thing to be said in his favor; he knew his own powers or followed his own inclinations; and the delicacy of his *tact* in general prevented him from attempting subjects uncongenial with it. He "trod the primrose path of dalliance," with equal prudence and modesty. That he is a little monotonous and tame, is all that can be said against him; and he seldom went out of his way to expose his deficiencies in a glaring point of view. He came round to subjects of beauty at last, or gave them that turn. A story is told of his having painted a very lovely head of a girl, and being asked from whom he had taken it, he replied, "From his old man!" This is not unlikely. He is the only great painter (except Correggio) who appears constantly to have subjected what he saw to an imaginary standard. His Magdalens are more beautiful than sorrowful; in his Madonnas there is more of sweetness and modesty than of elevation. He makes but little difference between his heroes and his heroines; his angels are women, and his women angels! If it be said that he repeated himself too often, and has painted too many Magdalens and Madonnas, I can only say in answer, "Would he had painted twice as many!" If Guido wanted compass and variety in his art, it signifies little, since what he wanted is abundantly supplied by others. He had softness, delicacy, and *ideal* grace in a supreme degree, and his fame rests on these as the cloud on the rock. It is to the highest point of excellence in any art or department that we look back with gratitude and admiration, as it is the highest mountain peak that we catch in the distance, and lose sight of only when it turns to air.

I know of no other difference between Raphael and Guido, than that the one was twice the man the other was. Raphael was a bolder genius, and invented according to nature: Guido only made draughts after his own disposition and character

There is a common cant of criticism which makes Titian merely a colorist. What he really wanted was invention: he had expression in the highest degree. I declare I have seen heads of his with more meaning in them than any of Raphael's. But he fell short of Raphael in this, that (except in one or two instances) he could not heighten and adapt the expression that he saw to different and more striking circumstances. He gave more of what he saw than any other painter that ever lived, and in the imitative part of his art had a more universal genius than Raphael had in composition and invention. Beyond the actual and habitual look of nature, however, "the demon that he served" deserted him, or became a very tame one. Vandyke gave more of the general air and manners of fashionable life than of individual character; and the subjects that he treated are neither remarkable for intellect nor passion. They are people of polished manners and placid constitutions; and many of the very best of them are "stupidly good." Titian's portraits, on the other hand, frequently present a much more formidable than inviting appearance. You would hardly trust yourself in a room with them. You do not bestow a cold, leisurely approbation on them, but look to see what they may be thinking of you, not without some apprehension for the result. They have not the clear smooth skins or the even pulse that Vandyke's seem to possess. They are, for the most part, fierce, wary, voluptuous, subtle, haughty. Raphael painted Italian faces as well as Titian. But he threw into them a character of intellect rather than of temperament. In Titian the irritability takes the lead, sharpens and gives direction to the understanding. There seems to be a personal controversy between the spectator and the individual whose portrait he contemplates, which shall be master of the other. I may refer to two portraits in the Louvre, the one by Raphael, the other by Titian (Nos. 1153 and 1210), in illustration of these remarks. I do not know two finer or more characteristic specimens of these masters, each in its way. The one is of a student dressed in black, absorbed in thought, intent on some problem, with the hands crossed and leaning on a table for support, as it were to give freer scope to the labor of the brain, and though the eyes are directed towards you, it is with evident absence of mind. Not so the other por-

trait, No. 1210. All its faculties are collected to see what it can make of you, as if you had intruded upon it with some hostile design, it takes a defensive attitude, and shows as much vigilance as dignity. It draws itself up, as if to say, "Well, what do you think of me?" and exercises a discretionary power over you. It has "an eye to threaten and command," not to be lost in idle thought, or in ruminating over some abstruse, speculative proposition. It is this intense personal character which, I think, gives the superiority to Titian's portraits over all others, and stamps them with a living and permanent interest. Of other pictures you tire, if you have them constantly before you; of his, never. For other pictures have either an abstracted look and you dismiss them, when you have made up your mind on the subject as a matter of criticism; or an heroic look, and you cannot be always straining your enthusiasm; or an insipid look, and you sicken of it. But whenever you turn to look at Titian's portraits, they appear to be looking at you; there seems to be some question pending between you, as though an intimate friend or inveterate foe were in the room with you; they exert a kind of fascinating power; and there is that exact resemblance of individual nature which is always new and always interesting, because you cannot carry away a mental abstraction of it, and you must recur to the object to revive it in its full force and integrity. I would as soon have Raphael's or most other pictures hanging up in a Collection, that I might pay an occasional visit to them: Titian's are the only ones that I should wish to have hanging in the same room with me for company!

Titian in his portraits appears to have understood the principle of historical design better than anybody. Every part tells, and has a bearing on the whole. There is no one who has such simplicity and repose—no violence, no affectation, no attempt at forcing an effect; insomuch that by the uninitiated he is often condemned as unmeaning and insipid. A turn of the eye, a compression of the lip decides the point. He just draws the face out of its most ordinary state, and gives it the direction he would have it take; but then every part takes the same direction, and the effect of this united impression (which is absolutely momentary and all but habitual) is wonderful. It is that which makes

his portraits the most natural and the most striking in the world. It may be compared to the effect of a number of small loadstones, that by acting together lift the greatest weights. Titian seized upon the lines of character in the most original and connected point of view. Thus in his celebrated portrait of Hippolito de Medici, there is a keen, sharpened expression that strikes you, like a blow from the spear that he holds in his hand. The look goes through you; yet it has no frown, no startling gesticulation no affected penetration. It is quiet, simple, but it almost withers you. The whole face and each separate feature is cast in the same acute or wedge-like form. The forehead is high and narrow, the eye-brows raised and coming to a point in the middle, the nose straight and peaked, the mouth contracted and drawn up at the corners, the chin acute, and the two sides of the face slanting to a point. The number of acute angles which the lines of the face form, are, in fact, a net entangling the attention and subduing the will. The effect is felt at once, though it asks time and consideration to understand the cause. It is a face which you would beware of rousing into anger or hostility, as you would beware of setting in motion some complicated and dangerous machinery. The possessor of it, you may be sure, is no trifler. Such, indeed, was the character of the man. This is to paint true portrait and true history. So if our artist painted a mild and thoughtful expression, all the lines of the countenance were softened and relaxed. If the mouth was going to speak, the whole face was going to speak. It was the same in color. The gradations are infinite, and yet so blended as to be imperceptible. No two tints are the same, though they produce the greatest harmony and simplicity of tone, like flesh itself. "If," said a person, pointing to the shaded side of a portrait of Titian, "you could turn this round to the light, you would find it would be of the same color as the other side!" In short, there is manifest in his portraits a greater tenaciousness and identity of impression than in those of any other painter. Form, color, feeling, character, seemed to adhere to his eye, and to become part of himself; and his pictures, on this account, "leave stings" in the minds of the spectators! There is, I grant, the same personal appeal, the same point-blank look in some of Raphael's portraits (see those of a

Princess of Arragon and of Count Castiglione, Nos. 1150 and 1151 as in Titian: but they want the texture of the skin and the minute individual details to stamp them with the same reality. And again, as to the uniformity of outline in the features, this principle has been acted upon and carried to excess by Kneller and other artists. The eyes, the eye-brows, the nose, the mouth, the chin, are rounded off as if they were turned in a *lathe*, or as a peruke-maker arranges the curls of a wig. In them it is vile and mechanical, without any reference to truth of character or nature; and instead of being pregnant with meaning and originality of expression, produces only insipidity and monotony.

Perhaps what is offered above as a key to the peculiar expression of Titian's heads may also serve to explain the difference between painting or copying a portrait. As the perfection of his faces consists in the entire unity and coincidence of all the parts, so the difficulty of ordinary portrait-painting is to bring them to bear at all, or to piece one feature, or one day's labor, on to another. In copying, this difficulty does not occur at all. The human face is not one thing, as the vulgar suppose, nor does it remain always the same. It has infinite varieties which the artist is obliged to notice and to reconcile, or he will make strange work. Not only the light and shade upon it do not continue for two minutes the same: the position of the head constantly varies (or if you are strict with a sitter, he grows sullen and stupid), each feature is in motion every moment, even while the artist is working at it, and in the course of a day the whole expression of the countenance undergoes a change, so that the expression which you gave to the forehead or eyes yesterday is totally incompatible with that which you have to give to the mouth to-day. You can only bring it back again to the same point or give it a consistent construction by an effort of imagination, or a strong feeling of character; and you must connect the features together less by the eye than by the mind. The mere setting down what you see in this medley of successive, teasing, contradictory impressions, would never do; either you must continually efface what you have done the instant before, or if you retain it, you will produce a piece of patchwork, worse than any caricature. There must be a comprehension of the whole, and in truth a *moral sense*

(as well as a literal one) to unravel the confusion, and guide you through the labyrinth of shifting muscles and features. You must feel what *this* means, and dive into the hidden soul, in order to know whether *that* is as it ought to be ; for you cannot be sure that it remains as it was. Portrait-painting is, then, painting from recollection and from a conception of character, with the object before us to assist the memory and understanding. In copying, on the contrary, one part does not run away and leave you in the lurch, while you are intent upon another. You have only to attend to what is before you, and finish it carefully a bit at a time, and you are sure that the whole will come right. One might parcel it out into squares, as in engraving, and copy one at a time, without seeing or thinking of the rest. I do not say that a conception of the whole, and a feeling of the art will not abridge the labor of copying, or produce a truer likeness; but it is the changeableness or identity of the object that chiefly constitutes the difficulty or facility of imitating it, and, in the latter case, reduces it nearly to a mechanical operation. It is the same in the imitation of *still-life*, where real objects have not a principle of motion in them. It is as easy to produce a *fac-simile* of a table or a chair as to copy a picture, because these things do not stir from their places any more than the features of a portrait stir from theirs. You may therefore bestow any given degree of minute and continued attention on finishing any given part without being afraid that when finished it will not correspond with the rest. Nay, it requires more talent to copy a fine portrait than to paint an original picture of a table or a chair, for the picture has a soul in it, and the table has not. It has been made an objection (and I think a just one) against the extreme high-finishing of the drapery and back-grounds in portraits (to which some schools, particularly the French, are addicted), that it gives an unfinished look to the face, the most important part of the picture. A lady or a gentleman cannot sit quite so long or so still as a lay-figure, and if you finish up each part according to the length of time it will remain in one position, the face will seem to have been painted for the sake of the drapery, not the drapery to set off the face. There is an obvious limit to everything, if we attend to common sense and feeling. If a carpet or a curtain will admit of

being finished more than the living face, we finish them less because they excite less interest, and we are less willing to throw away our time and pains upon them. This is the unavoidable result in a natural and well regulated style of art; but what is to be said of a school where no interest is felt in anything, where nothing is known of any object but that it is there, and where superficial and petty details which the eye can explore, and the hand execute, with persevering and systematic indifference, constitute the soul of art?

The expression is the great difficulty in history or portrait-painting, and yet it is the great clue to both. It renders forms doubly impressive from the interest and signification attached to them, and at the same time renders the imitation of them critically nice, by making any departure from the line of truth doubly sensible. Mr. Coleridge used to say, that what gave the romantic and mysterious interest to Salvator's landscapes was their containing some implicit analogy to human or other living forms. His rocks had a latent resemblance to the outline of a human face; his trees had the distorted jagged shape of a satyr's horns and grotesque features. I do not think this is the case; but it may serve to supply us with an illustration of the present question. Suppose a given outline to represent a human face, but to be so disguised by circumstances and little interruptions as to be mistaken for a projecting fragment of a rock in a natural scenery. As long as we conceive of this outline merely as a representation of a rock or other inanimate substance, any copy of it, however rude, will seem the same and as good as the original. Now let the disguise be removed and the general resemblance to a human face pointed out, and what before seemed perfect, will be found to be deficient in the most essential features. Let it be further understood to be a profile of a particular face that we know, and all likeness will vanish from the want of the individual expression, which can only be given by being felt. That is, the imitation of external and visible form is only correct or nearly perfect, when the information of the eye and the direction of the hand are aided and confirmed by the previous knowledge and actual feeling of character in the object represented. The more there is of character and feeling in any object, and the greater sympathy there is

with it in the mind of the artist, the closer will be the affinity between the imitation and the thing imitated; as the more there is of character and expression in the object without a proportionable sympathy with it in the imitator, the more obvious will this defect and the imperfection of the copy become. That is, expression is the great test and measure of a genius for painting and the fine arts. The mere imitation of *still-life*, however perfect, can never furnish proofs of the highest skill or talent; for there is an inner sense, a deep intuition into nature that is never unfolded by merely mechanical objects, and which, if it were called out by a new soul being suddenly infused into an inanimate substance, would make the former unconscious representation appear crude and vapid. The eye is sharpened and the hand made more delicate in its tact,

> "While by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

We could not only *see* but *feel* expression, by the help of the finest of all our senses, the sense of pleasure and pain. He then is the greatest painter who can put the greatest quantity of expression into his works, for this is the nicest and most subtle object of imitation; it is that in which any defect is soonest visible, which must be able to stand the severest scrutiny, and where the power of avoiding errors, extravagance, or tameness, can only be supplied by the fund of moral feeling, the strength or delicacy of the artist's sympathy with the ideal object of his imitation. To see or imitate any given sensible object is one thing, the effect of attention and practice; but to give expression to a face is to collect its meaning from a thousand other sources, is to bring into play the observation and feeling of one's whole life, or an infinity of knowledge bearing upon a single object in different degrees and manners, and implying a loftiness and refinement of character proportioned to the loftiness and refinement of expression delineated. Expression is of all things the least to be mistaken, and the most evanescent in its manifestations. Pope's lines on the character of women may be addressed to the painter who undertakes to embody it:

> 'Come then, the colors and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick it off in air;
> Choose a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch, ere it change, the Cynthia of the minute."

It is a maxim among painters that no one can paint more than his own character, or more than he himself understands or can enter into. Nay, even in copying a head, we have some difficulty in making the features unlike our own. A person with a low forehead or a short chin puts a constraint on himself in painting a high forehead or a long chin. So much has sympathy to do with what is supposed to be a mere act of servile imitation!— To pursue this argument one step further. People sometimes wonder what difficulty there can be in painting, and ask what you have to do but to set down what you see? This is true, but the difficulty is to see what is before you. This is at least as difficult as to learn any trade or language. We imagine that we see the whole of nature, because we are aware of no more than we see of it. We also suppose that any given object, a head, a hand, is one thing, because we see it at once, and call it by one name. But how little we see or know, even of the most familiar face, beyond a vague abstraction, will be evident to every one who tries to recollect distinctly all its component parts, or to draw the most rude outline of it for the first time; or who considers the variety of surface, the numberless lights and shades, the tints of the skin, every particle and pore of which varies, the forms and markings of the features, the combined expression, and all these caught (as far as common use is concerned) by a random glance, and communicated by a passing word. A student, when he first copies a head, soon comes to a stand, or is at a loss to proceed from seeing nothing more in the face than there is in his copy. After a year or two's practice he never knows when to have done, and the longer he has been occupied in copying a face or any particular feature, sees more and more in it, that he has left undone and can never hope to do. There have been only four or five painters who could ever produce a copy of the human countenance really fit to be seen; and even of these few none was ever perfect, except in giving some single quality or partial aspect of nature which happened to fall in with his own

particular studies and the bias of his genius, as Raphael the drawing, Rembrandt the light and shade, Vandyke ease and delicacy of appearance, &c. Titian gave more than any one else, and yet he had his defects. After this, shall we say that any the commonest and most uninstructed spectator sees the whole of nature at a single glance, and would be able to stamp a perfect representation of it on the canvas, if he could embody the image in his mind's eye ?

I have in this Essay mentioned one or two of the portraits in the Louvre that I like best. The two landscapes which I should most covet, are the one with a Rainbow by Rubens, and the Adam and Eve in Paradise by Poussin. In the first, shepherds are reposing with their flocks under the shelter of a breezy grove, the distances are of air, and the whole landscape seems just washed with the shower that has passed off. The Adam and Eve of Poussin is the full growth and luxuriant expansion of the principle of vegetation. It is the first lovely dawn of creation, when nature played her virgin fancies wild ; when all was sweetness and freshness, and the heavens dropped fatness. It is the very *ideal* of landscape-painting, and of the scene it is intended to represent. It throws us back to the first ages of the world, and to the only period of perfect human bliss, which is, however, on the point of being soon disturbed.* I should be contented with these

* I may be allowed to mention here (not for the sake of invidious comparison, but to explain my meaning), Mr. Martin's picture of Adam and Eve asleep in Paradise. It has this capital defect, that there is no *repose* in it. You see two insignificant naked figures, and a preposterous architectural landscape, like a range of buildings over-looking them. They might as well have been represented on the top of the pinnacle of the Temple, with the world and all the glories thereof spread out before them. They ought to have been painted imparadised in one another's arms, shut up in measureless content, with Eden's choicest bowers closing round them, and Nature stooping to clothe them with vernal flowers. Nothing could be too retired, too voluptuous, too sacred from " day's garish eye ;" on the contrary, you have a gaudy panoramic view, a glittering barren waste, a triple row of clouds, of rocks, and mountains, piled one upon the other, as if the imagination already bent its idle gaze over that wide world which was so soon to be our place of exile, and the aching, restless spirit of the artist was occupied in building a stately prison for our first parents, instead of decking their bridal bed, and wrapping them in a short-lived dream of bliss.

four or five pictures, the Lady by Vandyke, the Titian, the Presentation in the Temple, the Rubens, and the Poussin, or even with faithful copies of them, added to the two which I have of a young Neapolitan Nobleman and of the Hippolito de Medici; and which, when I look at them, recal other times and the feelings with which they were done. It is now twenty years since I made those copies, and I hope to keep them while I live. It seems to me no longer ago than yesterday. Should the next twenty years pass as swiftly, forty years will have glided by me like a dream. By this kind of speculation I can look down as from a slippery height on the beginning and the end of life beneath my feet, and the thought makes me dizzy!

My taste in pictures is, I believe, very different from that of rich and princely collectors. I would not give two-pence for the whole Gallery at Fonthill. I should like to have a few pictures hung round the room, that speak to me with well-known looks, that touch some string of memory—not a number of varnished, smooth, glittering gewgaws. The taste of the Great in pictures is singular, but not unaccountable. The King is said to prefer the Dutch to the Italian school of painting; and if you hint your surprise at this, you are looked upon as a very Gothic and *outrè* sort of person. You are told, however, by way of consolation,—"To be sure, there is Lord Carlisle likes an Italian picture—Mr. Holwell Carr likes an Italian picture—the Marquis of Stafford is fond of an Italian picture—Sir George Beaumont likes an Italian picture!" These, notwithstanding, are regarded as quaint and daring exceptions to the established rule; and their preference is a species of *leze majesté* in the Fine Arts, as great an eccentricity and want of fashionable etiquette, as if any gentleman or nobleman still preferred old claret to new, when the King is known to have changed his mind on this subject; or was guilty of dipping his forefinger and thumb in the middle of a snuff-box, instead of gradually approximating the contents to the edge of the box, according to the most approved models. One would imagine that the great and exalted in station would like lofty subjects in works of art, whereas they seem to have an almost exclusive predilection for the mean and mechanical. One would think those whose word was law, would be pleased with the great and strik-

ing effects of the pencil ;* on the contrary, they admire nothing but the little and elaborate. They have a fondness for cabinet and *furniture* pictures, and a proportionable antipathy to works of genius. Even art with them must be servile, to be tolerated. Perhaps the seeming contradiction may be explained thus. Such persons are raised so high above the rest of the species, that the more violent and agitating pursuits of mankind appear to them like the turmoil of ants on a mole-hill. Nothing interests them but their own pride and self-importance. Our passions are to them an impertinence; an expression of high sentiment they rather shrink from as a ludicrous and upstart assumption of equality. They therefore like what glitters to the eye, what is smooth to the touch ; but they shun, by an instinct of sovereign taste, whatever has a soul in it, or implies a reciprocity of feeling. The Gods of the earth can have no interest in anything human ; they are cut off from all sympathy with the "bosoms and businesses of men." Instead of requiring to be wound up beyond their habitual feeling of stately dignity, they wish to have the springs of over-strained pretension let down, to be relaxed with "trifles light as air," to be amused with the familiar and frivolous, and to have the world appear a scene of *still-life*, except as they disturb it! The little in thought and internal sentiment is a natural relief and set off to the oppressive sense of external magnificence. Hence kings babble and repeat they know not what. A childish dotage often accompanies the consciousness of absolute power. Repose is somewhere necessary, and the soul sleeps while the senses gloat around! Besides the mechanical and high-finished style of art may be considered as something *done to order*. It is a task to be executed more or less perfectly, according to the price given, and the industry of the artist. We stand by, as it were, to see the work done, insist upon a greater de-

* The Duke of Wellington, it is said, cannot enter into the merits of Raphael; but he admires "the spirit and fire" of Tintoret. I do not wonder at this bias. A sentiment probably never dawned upon his Grace's mind; but he may be supposed to relish the dashing execution and *hit or miss* manner of the Venetian artist. Oh, Raphael! well is it that it was one who did not understand thee, that blundered upon the destruction of humanity!

gree of neatness and accuracy, and exercise a sort of petty, jealous jurisdiction over each particular. We are judges of the minuteness of the details, and though ever so nicely executed, as they give us no ideas beyond what we had before, we do not feel humbled in the comparison. The artizan scarcely rises into the artist; and the name of genius is degraded rather than exalted in his person. The performance is so far ours that we have paid for it, and the highest price is all that is necessary to produce the highest finishing. But it is not so in works of genius and imagination. Their price is above rubies. The inspiration of the Muse comes not with the *fiat* of a monarch, with the donation of a patron; and, therefore, the Great turn with disgust or effeminate indifference from the mighty masters of the Italian school, because such works baffle and confound their self-love, and make them feel that there is something in the mind of man which they can neither give nor take away.

"Quam nihil ad tuum, Papiniane, ingenium!"

ESSAY XII.

On Dreams.

Dr. Spurzheim, in treating of the *Physiology of the Brain*, has the following curious passage:

"The state of somnambulism equally proves the plurality of the organs. This is a state of incomplete sleep, wherein several organs are watching. It is known that the brain acts upon the external world by means of voluntary motion, of the voice, and of the five external senses. Now, if in sleeping some organs be active, dreams take place; if the action of the brain be propagated to the muscles, there follow motions; if the action of the brain be propagated to the vocal organs, the sleeping person speaks. Indeed, it is known that sleeping persons dream and speak; others dream, speak, hear, and answer; others still dream, rise, do various things and walk. This latter state is called somnambulism, that is, the state of walking during sleep. Now, as the ear can hear, so the eyes may see, while the other organs sleep; and there are facts quite positive which prove that several persons in the state of somnambulism have seen, but always with open eyes. There are also convulsive fits, in which the patients see without hearing, and *vice versâ*. Some somnambulists do things of which they are not capable in a state of watching; and dreaming persons reason sometimes better than they do when awake. This phenomenon is not astonishing," &c.—Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, p. 217.

There is here a very singular mixing up of the flattest truisms with the most gratuitous assumptions; so that the one being told with great gravity, and the other delivered with the most familiar air, one is puzzled in a cursory perusal to distinguish which is which. This is an art of stultifying the reader, like that of the juggler, who shows you some plain matter-of-fact experiment just

as he is going to play off his capital trick. The mind is, by this alternation of style, thrown off its guard ; and between wondering first at the absurdity, and then at the superficiality of the work, becomes almost a convert to it. A thing exceedingly questionable is stated so roundly, you think there must be something in it : the plainest proposition is put in so doubtful and cautious a manner, you conceive the writer must see a great deal farther into the subject than you do. You mistrust your ears and eyes, and are in a fair way to resign the use of your understanding. It is a fine style of *mystifying*. Again, it is the practice with the German school, and in particular with Dr. Spurzheim, to run counter with common sense and the best authenticated opinions. They must always be more knowing than everybody else, and treat the wisdom of the ancients, and the wisdom of the moderns, much in the same supercilious way. It has been taken for granted generally that people see with their eyes ; and therefore it is stated in the above passage as a discovery of the author, "imparted in dreadful secresy," that sleep-walkers always see with their eyes open. The meaning of which is, that we are not to give too implicit or unqualified an assent to the principle, at which modern philosophers have arrived with some pains and difficulty, that we acquire our ideas of external objects through the senses. The *transcendental* sophists wish to back out of that, as too conclusive and well-defined a position. They would be glad to throw the whole of what has been done on this question into confusion again, in order to begin *de novo*, like children who construct houses with cards, and when the pack is built up, shuffle them all together on the table again. These intellectual Sysiphuses are always rolling the stone of knowledge up a hill, for the perverse pleasure of rolling it down again. Having gone as far as they can in the direction of reason and good sense, rather than seem passive or the slaves of any opinion, they turn back with a wonderful look of sagacity to all sorts of exploded prejudices and absurdity. It is a pity that we cannot *let well done alone*, and that after laboring for centuries to remove ignorance, we set our faces with the most wilful officiousness against the stability of knowledge. The *Physiognomical System* of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim is full of this disgusting cant. We are still only to *believe*

in all unbelief—in what they tell us. The less credulous we are of other things, the more faith we shall have in reserve for them: by exhausting our stock of scepticism and caution on such obvious matters of fact as that people always see with their eyes open, we shall be prepared to swallow their crude and extravagant theories whole, and not be astonished at "the phenomenon, that persons sometimes reason better asleep than awake!"

I have alluded to this passage because I myself am (or used some time ago to be) a sleep-walker; and know how the thing is. In this sort of disturbed, unsound sleep, the eyes are not closed, and are attracted by the light. I used to get up and go towards the window, and make violent efforts to throw it open. The air in some measure revived me, or I might have tried to fling myself out. I saw objects indistinctly, the houses, for instance, facing me on the opposite side of the street; but still it was some time before I could recognize them or recollect where I was: that is, I was still asleep, and the dimness of my senses (as far as it prevailed) was occasioned by the greater numbness of my memory. This phenomenon is not astonishing, unless we choose in all such cases to put the cart before the horse. For in fact, it is the mind that sleeps, and the senses (so to speak) only follow the example. The mind dozes, and the eyelids close in consequence: we do not go to sleep, because we shut our eyes. I can, however, speak to the fact of the eyes being open, when their sense is shut; or rather, when we are unable to draw just inferences from it. It is generally in the night-time indeed, or in a strange place, that the circumstance happens; but as soon as the light dawns upon the recollection, the obscurity and perplexity of the senses clear up. The external impression is made before, much in the same manner as it is after we are awake; but it does not lead to the usual train of associations connected with that impression; *e. g.* the name of the street or town where we are, who lives at the opposite house, how we came to sleep in the room where we are, &c.; all which are ideas belonging to our waking experience, and are at this time cut off or greatly disturbed by sleep. It is just the same as when persons recover from a swoon, and fix their eyes unconsciously on those about them, for a considerable time before they recollect where they are. Would any one but a

German physiologist think it necessary to assure us that at this time they see, but with their eyes open, or pretend that though they have lost all memory or understanding during their fainting fit, their minds then act more vigorously and freely than ever, because they are not distracted by outward impressions? The appeal is made to the outward sense, in the instances we have seen; but the mind is deaf to it, because its functions are for the time gone It is ridiculous to pretend with this author, that in sleep some of the organs of the mind rest, while others are active; it might as well be pretended that in sleep one eye watches while the other is shut. The stupor is general: the faculty of thought itself is impaired; and whatever ideas we have, instead of being confined to any particular faculty or the impressions of any one sense, and invigorated thereby, float at random from object to object, from one class of impressions to another, without coherence or control. The *conscious* or connecting link between our ideas, which forms them into separate groups or compares different parts and views of a subject together, seems to be that which is principally wanting in sleep; so that any idea that presents itself in this anarchy of the mind is lord of the ascendant for the moment, and is driven out by the next straggling notion that comes across it. The bundles of thought are, as it were, united, loosened from a common centre, and drift along the stream of fancy as it happens. Hence the confusion (not the concentration of the faculties) that continually takes place in this state of half-perception. The mind takes in but one thing at a time, but one part of a subject, and therefore cannot correct its sudden and heterogeneous transitions from one momentary impression to another by a larger grasp of understanding. Thus we confound one person with another, merely from some accidental coincidence, the name or the place where we have seen them, or their having been concerned with us in some particular transaction the evening before. They lose and regain their proper identity perhaps half a dozen times in this rambling way; nor are we able (though we are somewhat incredulous and surprised at these compound creations) to detect the error, from not being prepared to trace the same connected subject of thought to a number of varying and successive ramifications, or to form the idea of a *whole*.

We think that Mr. Such-a-one did so and so: then, from a second face coming across us, like the sliders of a magic lantern, it was not he, but another; then some one calls him by his right name, and he is himself again. We are little shocked at these gross contradictions; for if the mind was capable of perceiving them in all their absurdity, it would not be liable to fall into them. It runs into them for the same reason that it is hardly conscious of them when made.

> ——"That which was now a horse, a bear, a cloud,
> Even with a thought the rack dislimns,
> And makes it indistinct as water is in water."

The difference, so far then, between sleeping and waking seems to be, that in the latter we have a greater range of conscious recollections, a larger discourse of reason, and associate ideas in longer trains and more as they are connected one with another in the order of nature; whereas in the former, any two impressions, that meet or are alike, join company, and then are parted again, without notice, like the froth from the wave. So in madness, there is, I should apprehend, the same tyranny of the imagination over the judgment; that is, the mind has slipped its cable, and single images meet, and jostle, and unite suddenly together, without any power to arrange or compare them with others, with which they are connected in the world of reality. There is a continual phantasmagoria: whatever shapes and colors come together are by the heat and violence of the brain referred to external nature, without regard to the order of time, place, or circumstance. From the same want of continuity, we often forget our dreams so speedily: if we cannot catch them as they are passing out at the door, we never set eyes on them again. There is no clue or thread of imagination to trace them by. In a morning sometimes we have had a dream that we try in vain to recollect; it is gone, like the rainbow from the cloud. At other times (so evanescent is their texture) we forget that we have dreamt at all; and at these times the mind seems to have been a mere blank, and sleep presents only an image of death. Hence has arisen the famous dispute, *Whether the soul thinks always?*—on which Mr. Locke and different writers have bestowed so much tedious

and unprofitable discussion ; some maintaining that the mind was like a watch that goes continually, though more slowly and irregularly at one time than another ; while the opposite party contended that it often stopped altogether, bringing the example of sound sleep as an argument, and desiring to know what proof we could have of thoughts passing through the mind, of which it was itself perfectly unconscious, and retained not the slightest recollection. I grant, we often sleep so sound, or have such faint imagery passing through the brain, that if we awake by degrees, we forget it altogether : we recollect our first waking, and perhaps some imperfect suggestions of fancy just before ; but beyond this, all is mere oblivion. But I have observed that whenever I have been waked up suddenly, and not left to myself to recover from this state of mental torpor, I have been always dreaming of something, *i. e.* thinking, according to the tenor of the question. Let any one call you at any time, however fast asleep you may be, you make out their voice in the first surprise to be like some one's you were thinking of in your sleep. Let an accidental noise, the falling of something in the next room, rouse you up, you constantly find something to associate it with, or translate it back into the language of your slumbering thoughts. You are never taken completely at a *nonplus*—summoned, as it were, out of a state of non-existence. It is easy for any one to try the experiment upon himself ; that is, to examine every time he is waked up suddenly, so that his waking and sleeping states are brought into immediate contact, whether he has not in all such cases been dreaming of something, and not fairly *caught napping*. For myself, I think I can speak with certainty. It would indeed be rather odd to awake out of such an absolute privation and suspense of thought as is contended for by the partisans of the contrary theory. It would be a peep into the grave, a consciousness of death, an escape from the world of non-entity !

The vividness of our impressions in dreams, of which so much has been said, seems to be rather apparent than real ; or, if this mode of expression should be objected to as unwarrantable, rather physical than mental. It is a vapor, a fume, the effect of the "heat-oppressed brain." The imagination gloats over an idea, and doats at the same time. However warm or brilliant the

coloring of these changing appearances, they vanish with the dawn. They are put out by our waking thoughts, as the sun puts out a candle. It is unlucky that we sometimes remember the heroic sentiments, the profound discoveries, the witty repartees we have uttered in our sleep. The one turn to bombast, the others are mere truisms, and the last absolute nonsense. Yet we clothe them certainly with a fancied importance at the moment. This seems to be merely the effervescence of the blood or of the brain, physically acting. It is an odd thing in sleep, that we not only fancy we see different persons, and talk to them, but that we hear them make answers, and startle us with an observation or a piece of news; and though we of course put the answer into their mouths, we have no idea beforehand what it will be, and it takes us as much by surprise as it would in reality. This kind of successful ventriloquism which we practise upon ourselves may perhaps be in some measure accounted for from the short-sightedness and incomplete consciousness which were remarked above as the peculiar characteristics of sleep.

The power of prophesying or foreseeing things in our sleep, as from a higher and more abstracted sphere of thought, need not be here argued upon. There is, however, a sort of profundity in sleep; and it may be usefully consulted as an oracle in this way. It may be said, that the voluntary power is suspended, and things come upon us as unexpected revelations, which we keep out of our thoughts at other times. We may be aware of a danger, that yet we do not choose, while we have the full command of our faculties, to acknowledge to ourselves: the impending event will then appear to us as a dream, and we shall most likely find it verified afterwards. Another thing of no small consequence is, that we may sometimes discover our tacit, and almost unconscious sentiments, with respect to persons or things in the same way. We are not hypocrites in our sleep. The curb is taken off from our passions, and our imagination wanders at will. When awake, we check these rising thoughts, and fancy we have them not. In dreams, when we are off our guard, they return securely and unbidden. We may make this use of the infirmity of our sleeping metamorphosis, that we may repress any feelings of this sort that we disapprove in their incipient state, and detect,

ere it be too late, an unwarrantable antipathy or fatal passion. Infants cannot disguise their thoughts from others; and in sleep we reveal the secret to ourselves.

It should appear that I have never been in love, for the same reason. I never dream of the face of any one I am particularly attached to. I have thought almost to agony of the same person for years, nearly without ceasing, so as to have her face always before me, and to be haunted by a perpetual consciousness of disappointed passion, and yet I never in all that time dreamt of this person more than once or twice, and then not vividly. I conceive, therefore, that this perseverance of the imagination in a fruitless track must have been owing to mortified pride, to an intense desire and hope of good in the abstract, more than to love, which I consider as an individual and involuntary passion, and which therefore, when it is strong, must predominate over the fancy in sleep. I think myself into love, and dream myself out of it. I should have made a very bad Endymion, in this sense; for all the time the heavenly Goddess was shining over my head, I should never have had a thought about her. If I had waked and found her gone, I might have been in a considerable *taking*. Coleridge used to laugh at me for my want of the faculty of dreaming; and once, on my saying that I did not like the preternatural stories in the Arabian Nights (for the comic parts I love dearly), he said, "That must be because you never dream. There is a class of poetry built on this foundation, which is surely no inconsiderable part of our nature, since we are asleep and building up imaginations of this sort half our time." I had nothing to say against it: it was one of his conjectural subtleties, in which he excels all the persons I ever knew; but I had some satisfaction in finding afterwards, that I had Bishop Atterbury expressly on my side in this question, who has recorded his detestation of SINBAD THE SAILOR, in an interesting letter to Pope. Perhaps he too did not dream!

Yet I dream sometimes; I dream of the Louvre—*Intus et in cute*. I dreamed I was there a few weeks ago, and that the old scene returned—that I looked for my favorite pictures, and found them gone or erased. The dream of my youth came upon me; a glory and a vision unutterable, that comes no more but in dark-

ness and in sleep: my heart rose up, and I fell on my knees, and lifted up my voice and wept, and I awoke. I also dreamed a little while ago, that I was reading the New Eloise to an old friend, and came to the concluding passages in Julia's farewell letter, which had much the same effect upon me. The words are, "*Trop heureuse d'acheter au prix de ma vie le droit de t'aimer toujours sans crime et de te le dire encore une fois, avant que je meurs!*" I used to sob over this passage twenty years ago; and in this dream about it lately, I seemed to live these twenty years over again in one short moment! I do not dream ordinarily; and there are people who never could see anything in the *New Eloise*. Are we not quits!

ESSAY XIII.

On Envy (A Dialogue).

H. I HAD a theory about Envy at one time, which I have partly given up of late—which was, that there was no such feeling, or that what is usually considered as envy or dislike of real merit is, more properly speaking, jealousy of false pretensions to it. I used to illustrate the argument by saying, that this was the reason we were not envious of the dead, because their merit was established beyond the reach of cavil or contradiction; whereas we are jealous and uneasy at sudden and upstart popularity, which wants the seal of time to confirm it, and which after all may turn out to be false and hollow. There is no danger that the testimony of ages should be reversed, and we add our suffrages to it with confidence, and even with enthusiasm. But we doubt reasonably enough, whether that which was applauded yesterday may not be condemned to-morrow; and are afraid of setting our name to a fraudulent claim to distinction. However satisfied we may be in our own minds, we are not sufficiently borne out by a general opinion and sympathy to prevent certain misgivings and scruples on the subject. No one thinks, for instance, of denying the merit of Teniers in his particular style of art, and no one consequently thinks of envying him. The merit of Wilkie, on the contrary, was at first strongly contested, and there were other painters set up in opposition to him, till now that he has become a sort of *classic* in his way, he has ceased to be an object of envy or dislike, because no one doubts his real excellence, as far as it goes. He has no more than justice done him, and the mind never revolts at justice. It only rejects false or superficial claims to admiration, and is incensed to see the world take up with appearances, when they have no solid foundation to support them. We are not envious of Rubens or Raphael, because their fame is a pledge of their genius: but if any one were to bring

forward the highest living names as equal to these, it immediately sets the blood in a ferment, and we try to stifle the sense we have of their merits, not because they are new or modern, but because we are not sure they will ever be old. Could we be certain that posterity would sanction our award, we should grant it without scruple, even to an enemy and a rival.

N. That which you describe is not envy. Envy is when you hate and would destroy all excellence that you do not yourself possess. So they say that Raphael, after he had copied the figures on one of the antique vases, endeavored to deface them; and Hoppner, it has been said, used to get pictures of Sir Joshua's into his possession, on purpose to paint them over and spoil them.

H. I do not believe the first, certainly. Raphael was too great a man, and with too fortunate a temper, to need or to wish to prop himself up on the ruins of others. As to Hoppner, he might perhaps think that there was no good reason for the preference given to Sir Joshua's portraits over his own, that his women of quality were the more airy and fashionable of the two, and might be tempted (once perhaps) in a fit of spleen, of caprice or impatience, to blot what was an eye-sore to himself from its old-fashioned, faded, dingy look, and at the same time dazzled others from the force of tradition and prejudice. Why, he might argue, should that old fellow run away with all the popularity even among those who (as he well knew) in their hearts preferred his own insipid, flaunting style to any other? Though it might be true that Sir Joshua was the greater painter, yet it was not true that Lords and Ladies thought so: he felt that he ought to be *their* favorite, and he might naturally hate what was continually *thrust in his dish*, and (as far as those about him were concerned) unjustly set over his head. Besides, Hoppner had very little of his own to rely on, and might wish, by destroying, to conceal the source from whence he had borrowed almost everything.

N. Did you never feel envy?

H. Very little, I think. In truth, I am out of the way of it: for the only pretension, of which I am tenacious, is that of being a metaphysician; and there is so little attention paid to this subject to pamper one's vanity, and so little fear of losing that little from competition, that there is scarcely any room for envy here.

One occupies the niche of eminence in which one places one's self, very quietly and contentedly! If I have ever felt this passion at all, it has been where some very paltry fellow has by trick and management contrived to obtain much more credit than he was entitled to. There was ————, to whom I had a perfect antipathy. He was the antithesis of a man of genius; and yet he did better, by mere dint of dullness, than many men of genius. This was intolerable. There was something in the man and in his manner, with which you could not possibly connect the idea of admiration, or of anything that was not merely mechanical—

"His look made the still air cold."

He repelled all sympathy and cordiality. What he did (though amounting only to mediocrity) was an insult on the understanding. It seemed that he should be able *to do nothing;* for he was nothing either in himself or in other people's idea of him! Mean actions or gross expressions too often unsettle one's theory of genius. We are unable as well as unwilling to connect the feeling of high intellect with low moral sentiment: the one is a kind of desecration of the other. I have for this reason been sometimes disposed to disparage Turner's fine landscapes, and be glad when he failed in his higher attempts, in order that my conception of the artist and his pictures might be more of a piece. This is not envy or an impatience of extraordinary merit, but an impatience of the incongruities in human nature, and of the drawbacks and stumbling-blocks in the way of our admiration of it. Who is there that admires the Author of Waverley more than I do? Who is there that despises Sir Walter Scott more? I do not like to think there should be a second instance of the same person's being

"The wisest, meanest of mankind—"

and should be heartily glad if the greatest genius of the age should turn out to be an honest man. The only thing that renders this *mis-alliance* between first-rate intellect and want of principle endurable is that such an extreme instance of it teaches us that great moral lesson of moderating our expectations of human perfection, and enlarging our indulgence for human infirmity

N. You start off with an idea as usual, and torture the plain state of the case into a paradox. There may be some truth in what you suppose; but malice or selfishness is at the bottom of the severity of your criticism, not the love of truth or justice, though you may make it the pretext. You are more angry at Sir Walter Scott's success than at his servility. You would give yourself no trouble about his poverty of spirit, if he had not made a hundred thousand pounds by his writings. The sting lies there, though you may try to conceal it from yourself.

H. I do not think so. I hate the sight of the Duke of Wellington for his foolish face, as much as for anything else. I cannot believe that a great general is contained under such a pasteboard vizor of a man. This, you'll say, is party spite, and rage at his good-fortune. I deny it. I always liked Lord Castlereagh for the gallant spirit that shone through his appearance; and his fine bust surmounted and crushed fifty orders that glittered beneath it. Nature seemed to have meant him for something better than he was. But in the other instance, Fortune has evidently played Nature a trick,

"To throw a cruel sunshine on a fool."

N. The truth is, you were reconciled to Lord Castlereagh's face, and patronized his person, because you felt a sort of advantage over him in point of style. His blunders qualified his success; and you fancied you could take his speeches in pieces, whereas you could not undo the battles the other had won.

H. So I have been accused of denying the merits of Pitt, from political dislike and prejudice: but who is there that has praised Burke more than I have? It is a subject I am never weary of, because I feel it.

N. You mean, because he is dead, and is now little talked of; and you think you show superior discernment and liberality by praising him. If there was a *Burke-Club*, you would say nothing about him. You deceive yourself as to your own motives, and weave a wrong theory out of them for human nature. The love of distinction is the ruling passion of the human mind; we grudge whatever draws off attention from ourselves to others; and all our actions are but different contrivances, either by sheer malice

or affected liberality, to keep it to ourselves or share it with others. Goldsmith was jealous even of beauty in the other sex. When the people of Amsterdam gathered round the balcony to look at the Miss Hornecks, he grew impatient, and said peevishly, "There are places where I also am admired." It may be said—What could their beauty have to do with his reputation? No: it could not tend to lessen it, but it drew admiration from himself to them. So Mr. Croker, the other day, when he was at the Academy dinner, made himself conspicuous by displaying the same feeling. He found fault with everything, *damned* all the pictures—landscapes, portraits, busts, nothing pleased him; and not contented with this, he then fell foul of the art itself, which he treated as a piece of idle foolery, and said that Raphael had thrown away his time in doing what was not worth the trouble. This, besides being insincere, was a great breach of good-manners, which none but a low-bred man would be guilty of; but he felt his own consequence annoyed; he saw a splendid exhibition of art, a splendid dinner set out, the Nobility, the Cabinet-Ministers, the branches of the Royal Family invited to it; the most eminent professors were there present; it was a triumph and a celebration of art; a dazzling proof of the height to which it had attained in this country, and of the esteem in which it was held. He felt that he played a very subordinate part in all this; and in order to relieve his own wounded vanity, he was determined (as he thought) to mortify that of others. He wanted to make himself of more importance than anybody else, by trampling on Raphael and on the art itself. It was ridiculous and disgusting, because every one saw through the motive; so that he defeated his own object.

H. And he would have avoided this exposure, if with all his conceit and ill-humor, he had had the smallest taste for the art, or perception of the beauties of Raphael. He has just knowledge enough of drawing to make a whole-length sketch of Bonaparte, verging on caricature, yet not palpably outraging probability; so that it looked like a fat, stupid, *common-place* man, or a flattering likeness of some legitimate monarch—he had skill, cunning, servility enough to do this with his own hand, and to circulate a print of it with zealous activity, as an indirect means of degrading him in appearance to that low level to which fortune had once raised

him in reality. But the man who could do this deliberately, and with satisfaction to his own nature, was not the man to understand Raphael, and might slander him or any other, the greatest of earth's born, without injuring or belying any feeling of admiration or excellence in his own breast; for no such feeling had ever entered there.

N. Come, this is always the way. Now you are growing personal. Why do you so constantly let your temper get the better of your reason?

H. Because I hate a hypocrite, a time-server, and a slave. But to return to the question, and say no more about this "*talking potatoe*"*—I do not think that, except in circumstances of peculiar aggravation, or of extraordinary ill-temper and moroseness of disposition, any one who has a thorough feeling of excellence has a delight in gainsaying it. The excellence that we feel, we participate in as if it were our own—it becomes ours by transfusion of mind—it is instilled into our hearts—it mingles with our blood. We are unwilling to allow merit, because we are unable to perceive it. But to be convinced of it, is to be ready to acknowledge and pay homage to it. Illiberality or narrowness of feeling is a narrowness of taste, a want of proper *tact*. A bigoted and exclusive spirit is real blindness to all excellence but our own, or that of some particular school or sect. I think I can give an instance of this in some friends of mine, on whom you will be disposed to have no more mercy than I have on Mr. Croker—I mean the *Lake School*. Their system of Ostracism is not unnatural: it begins only with the natural limits of their tastes and feelings. Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey have no feeling for the excellence of Pope, or Goldsmith, or Gray—they do not enter at all into their merits, and on that account it is that they deny, proscribe, and envy them. *Incredulus odi*, is the explanation here, and in all such cases. I am satisfied that the fine turn of thought in Pope, the gliding verse of Goldsmith, the brilliant diction of Gray have no charms for the Author of the Lyrical Ballads: he has no faculty in his mind to which these qualities of poetry address

* Mr. Croker made his first appearance in this country as a hack-writer, and received this surname from the classic lips of Mr. Cumberland.

themselves. It is not an oppressive, galling sense of them, and a burning envy to rival them, and shame that he cannot—he would not, if he could. He has no more ambition to write couplets like Pope, than to turn a barrel-organ. He has no pleasure in such poetry, and therefore he has no patience with others that have. The enthusiasm that they feel and express on the subject seems an effect without a cause, and puzzles and provokes the mind accordingly. Mr. Wordsworth, in particular, is narrower in his tastes than other people, because he sees everything from a single and original point of view. Whatever does not fall in strictly with this, he accounts no better than a play or a delusion, or a play upon words.

N. You mistake the matter altogether. The acting principle in their minds is an inveterate selfishness or desire of distinction. They see that a particular kind of excellence has been carried to its height—a height that they have no hope of arriving at—the road is stopped up; they must therefore strike into a different path; and in order to divert the public mind and draw attention to themselves, they affect to decry the old models, and overturn what they cannot rival. They know they cannot write like Pope or Dryden, or would be only imitators if they did; and they consequently strive to gain an original and equal celebrity by singularity and affectation. Their simplicity is not natural to them: it is the *forlorn-hope* of impotent and disappointed vanity.

H. I cannot think that. It may be so in part, but not principally or altogether. Their minds are cast in a peculiar mould, and they cannot produce or receive any other impressions than those which they do. They are, as to matters of taste, *très bornés*.

N. You make them out stupider than I thought. I have sometimes spoken disrespectfully of their talents, and so I think, comparatively with those of some of our standard writers. But I certainly should never conceive them so lost to common sense, as not to perceive the beauty, or splendor, or strength of Pope and Dryden. They are dazzled by it, and wilfully shut their eyes to it, and try to throw dust in those of other people. We easily discern and are confounded by excellence, which we are conscious we should in vain attempt to equal. We may see that another is

taller than ourselves, and yet we may know that we can never grow to his stature. A dwarf may easily envy a giant.

H. They would like the comparison to Polyphemus in "Acis and Galatea" better. They think that little men have run away with the prize of beauty.

N. No one admires poetry more than I do, or sees more beauties in it; though if I were to try a thousand years, I should never be able to do anything to please myself.

H. Perhaps not in the mechanical part; but still you admire and are most struck with those passages in poetry, that accord with the previous train of your own feelings, and give you back the images of your own mind. There is something congenial in taste, at least, between ourselves and those we admire. I do not think there is any point of sympathy between Pope and the *Lake School:* on the contrary, I know there is an antipathy between them. When you speak of Titian, you look like him. I can understand how it is that you talk so well on that subject, and that your discourse has an extreme unction about it, a marrowiness like his coloring. But I do not believe that the late Mr. West had the least notion of Titian's peculiar excellences—he would think one of his own copies of him as good as the original, and his own historical compositions much better. He would therefore, I conceive, sit and listen to a conversation in praise of him with something like impatience, and think it an interruption to more important discussions on the principles of high art. But if Mr. West had ever seen in nature what there is to be found in Titian's copies from it, he would never have thought of such a comparison, and would have bowed his head in deep humility at the very mention of his name. He might not have been able to do like him, and yet might have seen nature with the same eyes.

N. We do not always admire most what we can do best; but often the contrary. Sir Joshua's admiration of Michael Angelo was perfectly sincere and unaffected; but yet nothing could be more diametrically opposite than the minds of the two men—there was an absolute gulf between them. It was the consciousness of his own inability to execute such works, that made him more sensible of the difficulty and the merit. It was the same with his fondness for Poussin. He was always exceedingly angry with

me for not admiring him enough. But this showed his good sense and modesty. Sir Joshua was always on the *look-out* for whatever might enlarge his notions on the subject of his art, and supply his defects; and did not, like some artists, measure all possible excellence by his own actual deficiencies. He thus improved and learned something daily. Others have lost their way by setting out with a pragmatical notion of their own self-sufficiency, and have never advanced a single step beyond their first crude conceptions. Fuseli was to blame in this respect. He did not want capacity or enthusiasm, but he had an overweening opinion of his own peculiar acquirements. Speaking of Vandyke, he said he would not go across the way to see the finest portrait he had ever painted. He asked—"What is it but a little bit of color?" Sir Joshua said, on hearing this—"Aye, he'll live to repent it." And he has lived to repent it. With that little bit added to his own heap, he would have been a much greater painter, and a happier man.

H. Yes: but I doubt whether he could have added it in practice. I think the indifference, in the first instance, arises from the want of taste and capacity. If Fuseli had possessed an eye for color, he would not have despised it in Vandyke. But we reduce others to the limits of our own capacity. We think little of what we cannot do, and envy it where we imagine that it meets with disproportioned admiration from others. A dull, pompous and obscure writer has been heard to exclaim, "That *dunce*, Wordsworth!" This was excusable in one who is utterly without feeling for any objects in nature, but those which would make splendid furniture for a drawing-room, or any sentiment of the human heart, but that with which a slave looks up to a despot, or a despot looks down upon a slave. This contemptuous expression was an effusion of spleen and impatience at the idea tha there should be any one who preferred Wordsworth's descriptions of a daisy or a linnet's nest to his *auctioneer*-poetry about curtains, and palls, and sceptres, and precious stones: but had Wordsworth, in addition to his original sin of simplicity and true genius, been a popular writer, his contempt would have turned into hatred. As it is, he tolerates his *idle nonsense:* there is a link of friendship in mutual political servilit. ; and besides, he

has a fellow feeling with him, as one of those writers of whose merits the world have not been fully sensible. Mr. Croly set out with high pretensions, and had some idea of rivalling Lord Byron in a certain lofty, imposing style of versification: but he is probably by this time convinced that mere constitutional *hauteur* as ill supplies the place of elevation of genius, as of the pride of birth; and that the public know how to distinguish between a string of gaudy, painted, turgid phrases, and the vivid creations of fancy, or touching delineations of the human heart.

N. What did you say the writer's name was?

H. Croly. He is one of the Royal Society of Authors.

N. I never heard of him. Is he an imitator of Lord Byron, did you say?

H. I am afraid neither he nor Lord Byron would have it thought so.

N. Such imitators do all the mischief, and bring real genius into disrepute. This is in some measure an excuse for those who have endeavored to disparage Pope and Dryden. We have had a surfeit of imitations of them. Poetry, in the hands of a set of mechanic scribblers, had become such a tame, mawkish thing, that we could endure it no longer, and our impatience of the abuse of a good thing transferred itself to the original source. It was this which enabled Wordsworth and the rest to raise up a new school (or to attempt it) on the ruins of Pope; because a race of writers had succeeded him without one particle of his wit, sense and delicacy, and the world were tired of their everlasting *sing-song* and *namby-pamby*. People were disgusted at hearing the faults of Pope (the part most easily imitated) cried up as his greatest excellence, and were willing to take refuge from such nauseous cant in any novelty.

H. What you now observe comes nearly to my account of the matter. Sir Andrew Wylie will sicken people of the Author of Waverley. It was but the other day that some one was proposing that there should be a Society formed for not reading the Scotch Novels. But it is not the excellence of that fine writer that we are tired of, or revolt at, but vapid imitations or catch-penny repetitions of himself. Even the quantity of them has an obvious tendency to lead to this effect. It lessens, instead of

increasing our admiration: for it seems to be an evidence that there is no difficulty in the task, and leads us to suspect something like trick or deception in their production. We have not been used to look upon works of genius as of the *fungus* tribe. Yet these are so. We had rather doubt our own taste than ascribe such a superiority of genius to another, that it works without consciousness or effort, executes the labor of a life in a few weeks, writes faster than the public can read, and scatters the rich materials of thought and feeling like so much chaff.

N. Aye, there it is. We had rather do anything than acknowledge the merit of another, if we have any possible excuse or evasion to help it. Depend upon it, you are glad Sir Walter Scott is a Tory—because it gives you an opportunity of qualifying your involuntary admiration of him. You would be sorry indeed if he were what you call an *honest man!* Envy is like a viper coiled up at the bottom of the heart, ready to spring upon and poison whatever approaches it. We live upon the vices, the imperfections, the misfortunes, and disappointments of others, as our natural food. We cannot bear a superior or an equal. Even our pretended cordial admiration is only a subterfuge of our vanity. By raising one, we proportionably lower and mortify others. Our self-love may perhaps be taken by surprise and thrown off its guard by novelty; but it soon recovers itself, and begins to cool in its warmest expressions, and finds every possible fault. Ridicule, for this reason, is sure to prevail over truth, because the malice of mankind thrown into the scale gives the casting-weight. We have one succession of authors, of painters, of favorites, after another, whom we hail in their turns, because they operate as a diversion to one another, and relieve us of the galling sense of the superiority of any one individual for any length of time. By changing the object of our admiration, we secretly persuade ourselves that there is no such thing as excellence. It is that which we hate above all things. It is the worm that gnaws us, that never dies. The mob shout when a king or a conqueror appears: they would take him and tear him in pieces, but that he is the scape-goat of their pride and vanity, and makes all other men appear like a herd of slaves and cowards. Instead of a thousand equals, we compound for one superior, and allay all heart-burn-

ings and animosities among ourselves, by giving the palm to *the least worthy*. This is the secret of monarchy. Loyalty is not the love of kings, but hatred and jealousy of mankind. A lacquey rides behind his lord's coach, and feels no envy of his master. Why? because he looks down and laughs, in his borrowed finery, at the ragged rabble below. Is it not so in our profession? What Academician eats his dinner in peace, if a rival sits near him; if his own are not the most admired pictures in the room; or, in that case, if there are any others that are at all admired, and divide distinction with him? Is not every artifice used to place the pictures of other artists in the worst light? Do they not go there after their performances are hung up, and try to *paint me another out?* What is the case among players? Does not a favorite actor threaten to leave the stage, as soon as a new candidate for public favor is taken the least notice of? Would not a Manager of a theatre (who has himself pretensions) sooner see it burnt down, than that it should be saved from ruin and lifted into the full tide of public prosperity and favor, by the efforts of one whom he conceives to have supplanted himself in the popular opinion? Do we not see an author, who has had a tragedy damned, sit at the play every night of a new performance for years after, in the hopes of gaining a new companion in defeat? Is it not an indelible offence to a picture-collector and patron of the arts, to hint that another has a fine head in his collection? Will any merchant in the city allow another to be worth a *plum?* What wit will applaud a *bon mot* by a rival? He sits uneasy and out of countenance, till he has made another, which he thinks will make the company forget the first. Do women ever allow beauty in others? Observe the people in a country-town, and see how they look at those who are better dressed than themselves; listen to the talk in country-places, and mind if it is composed of anything but slanders, gossip, and lies.

H. But don't you yourself admire Sir Joshua Reynolds?

N. Why, yes: I think I have no envy myself, and yet I have sometimes caught myself at it. I don't know that I do not admire Sir Joshua merely as a screen against the reputation of bad pictures.

H. Then, at any rate, what I say is true: we envy the good less than we do the bad.

N. I do not think so; and am not sure that Sir Joshua did himself not admire Michael Angelo to get rid of the superiority of Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt, which pressed closer on him, and "galled his kibe more."

H. I should not think that at all unlikely; for I look upon Sir Joshua as rather a spiteful man, and always thought he could have little real feeling for the works of Michael-Angelo or Raphael, which he extolled so highly, or he would not have been insensible to their effect the first time he ever beheld them.

N. He liked Sir Peter Lely better.

ESSAY XIV.

On the difference between Writing and Speaking.

"*Some minds are proportioned to that which may be despatched at once, or within a short return of time: others to that which begins afar off, and is to be won with length of pursuit.*" LORD BACON.

IT is a common observation, that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well. Not only is it obvious that the two faculties do not always go together in the same proportions: but they are not usually in direct opposition to each other. We find that the greatest authors often make the worst company in the world; and again, some of the liveliest fellows imaginable in conversation, or extempore speaking, seem to lose all their vivacity and spirit the moment they set pen to paper. For this a greater degree of quickness or slowness of parts, education, habit, temper, turn of mind, and a variety of collateral and predisposing causes, are necessary to account. The subject is at least curious, and worthy of an attempt to explain it. I shall endeavor to illustrate the difference by familiar examples rather than by analytical reasonings. The philosopher of old was not unwise, who defined motion by getting up and walking.

The great leading distinction between writing and speaking is, that more time is allowed for the one than the other: and hence different faculties are required for, and different objects attained by, each. He is properly the best speaker who can collect together the greatest number of apposite ideas at a moment's warning: he is properly the best writer who can give utterance to the greatest quantity of valuable knowledge in the course of his whole life. The chief requisite for the one, then, appears to be quickness and facility of perception—for the other, patience of soul, and a power increasing with the difficulties it has to master. He cannot be denied to be an expert speaker, a lively companion,

who is never at a loss for something to say on every occasion or subject that offers: he, by the same rule, will make a respectable writer, who, by dint of study, can find out anything good to say upon any one point that has not been touched upon before, or who, by asking for time, can give the most complete and comprehensive view of any question. The one must be done off-hand, at a single blow: the other can only be done by a repetition of blows, by having time to think and do better. In speaking, less is required of you, if you only do it at once, with grace and spirit: in writing, you stipulate for all that you are capable of, but you have the choice of your own time and subject. You do not expect from the manufacturer the same dispatch in executing an order that you do from the shopkeeper or warehouseman. The difference of *quicker* and *slower*, however, is not all: that is merely a difference of comparison in doing the same thing. But the writer and speaker have to do things essentially different. Besides habit, and greater or less facility, there is also a certain reach of capacity, a certain depth or shallowness, grossness or refinement of intellect, which marks out the distinction between those whose chief ambition is to shine by producing an immediate effect, or who are thrown back, by a natural bias, on the severer researches of thought and study.

We see persons of that standard or texture of mind that they can do nothing, but on the spur of the occasion: if they have time to deliberate, they are lost. There are others who have no resource, who cannot advance a step by any efforts or assistance, beyond a successful arrangement of common-places: but these they have always at command, at everybody's service. There is F——; meet him where you will in the street, he has his topic ready to discharge in the same breath with the customary forms of salutation; he is hand and glove with it; on it goes and off, and he manages it like Wart his caliver.

> Hear him but reason in divinity,
> And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
> You would desire that he were made a prelate.
> Let him but talk of any state-affair,
> You'd say it had been all in all his study.
> Turn him to any cause of policy,

> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter. When he speaks,
> The air, a charter'd libertine, stands still—

but, ere you have time to answer him, he is off like a shot, to repeat the same rounded, fluent observations to others:—a perfect master of the sentences, a walking polemic wound up for the day, a smartly bound political pocket-book! Set the same person to write a common paragraph, and he cannot get through it for very weariness: ask him a question, ever so little out of the common road, and he stares you in the face. What does all this bustle, animation, plausibility, and command of words amount to? A lively flow of animal spirits, a good deal of confidence, a communicative turn, and a tolerably tenacious memory with respect to floating opinions and current phrases. Beyond the routine of the daily newspapers and coffee-house criticism, such persons do not venture to think at all: or if they did, it would be so much the worse for them, for they would only be perplexed in the attempt, and would perform their part in the mechanism of society with so much the less alacrity and easy volubility.

The most dashing orator I ever heard is the flattest writer I ever read. In speaking, he was like a volcano vomiting out *lava;* in writing, he is like a volcano burnt out. Nothing but the dry cinders, the hard shell remains. The tongues of flame, with which, in haranguing a mixed assembly, he used to illuminate his subject, and almost scorched up the panting air, do not appear painted on the margin of his works. He was the model of a flashy, powerful demagogue—a madman blest with a fit audience. He was possessed, infuriated with the patriotic *mania;* he seemed to rend and tear the rotten carcase of corruption with the remorseless, indecent rage of a wild beast: he mourned over the bleeding body of his country, like another Antony over the dead body of Cæsar, as if he would "move the very stones of Rome to rise and mutiny:" he pointed to the "Persian abodes, the glittering temples" of oppression and luxury, with prophetic exultation; and, like another Helen, had almost fired another Troy! The lightning of national indignation flashed from his eye; the workings of the popular mind were seen laboring in his bosom: it writhed and swelled with its rank "fraught of aspics' tongues," and the poison

frothed over at his lips. Thus qualified, he "wielded at will the fierce democracy, and fulmin'd over" an area of souls, of no mean circumference. He who might be said to have "roared you in the ears of the groundlings an 'twere any lion, aggravates his voice" on paper, "like any sucking-dove." It is not merely that the same individual cannot sit down quietly in his closet, and produce the same, or a correspondent effect—that what he delivers over to the compositor is tame, and trite, and tedious—that he cannot by any means, as it were, "create a soul under the ribs of death"—but sit down yourself, and read one of these very popular and electrical effusions (for they have been published) and you would not believe it to be the same! The thunder-and-lightning mixture of the orator turns out a mere drab-colored suit in the person of the prose-writer. We wonder at the change, and think there must be some mistake, some leger-de-main trick played off upon us, by which what before appeared so fine now appears to be so worthless. The deception took place *before;* now it is removed. "Bottom! thou art translated!" might be placed as a motto under most collections of printed speeches that I have had the good fortune to meet with, whether originally addressed to the people, the senate, or the bar. Burke's and Windham's form an exception: Mr. Coleridge's *Conciones ad Populum* do not, any more than Mr. Thelwall's *Tribune*. What we read is the same: what we hear and see is different—"the self-same words, but *not* to the self-same tune." The orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of the voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude, the inexplicable dumb show and noise,—all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear,"—are no longer there, and without these he is nothing;—his "fire and air" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the God of eloquence and of our idolatry sinks into a common mortal, or an image of lead, with a few labels, nicknames, and party watch-words stuck in his mouth. The truth is, that these always made up the stock of his intellectual wealth; but a certain exaggeration and extravagance of *manner* covered the nakedness, and swelled out the emptiness of the *matter:* the sympathy of angry multitudes with an impassioned theatrical declaimer supplied the place of argument or wit; while the physical animation and

ardor of the speaker evaporated in "sound and fury, signifying nothing," and leaving no trace behind it. A popular speaker (such as I have been here describing) is like a vulgar actor off the stage—take away his cue, and he has nothing to say for himself. Or he is so accustomed to the intoxication of popular applause, that without that stimulus he has no motive or power of exertion left—neither imagination, understanding, liveliness, common sense, words nor ideas—he is fairly cleared out; and in the intervals of sober reason, is the dullest and most imbecile of all mortals.

An orator can hardly get beyond *common-places:* if he does, he gets beyond his hearers. The most successful speakers, even in the House of Commons, have not been the best scholars or the finest writers—neither those who took the most profound views of their subject, nor who adorned it with the most original fancy, or the richest combinations of language. Those speeches that in general told best at the time, are not now readable. What were the materials of which they were chiefly composed? An imposing detail of passing events, a formal display of official documents, an appeal to established maxims, an echo of popular clamor, some worn-out metaphor newly vamped-up,—some hackneyed argument used for the hundredth, nay thousandth time, to fall in with the interests, the passions, or prejudices of listening and devoted admirers;—some truth or falsehood, repeated as the Shibboleth of party time out of mind, which gathers strength from sympathy as it spreads, because it is understood or assented to by the million, and finds, in the increased action of the minds of numbers, the weight and force of an instinct. A COMMON-PLACE does not leave the mind "sceptical, puzzled, and undecided in the moment of action:"—"it gives a body to opinion, and a permanence to fugitive belief." It operates mechanically, and open an instantaneous and infallible communication between the hearer and speaker. A set of cant phrases, arranged in sounding sentences, and pronounced "with good emphasis and discretion," keep the gross and irritable humors of an audience in constant fermentation; and levy no tax on the understanding. To give a reason for anything is to breed a doubt of it, which doubt you may not remove in the sequel; either because your reason may

not be a good one, or because the person to whom it is addressed may not be able to comprehend it, or because *others* may not be able to comprehend it. He who offers to go into the grounds of an acknowledged axiom, risks the unanimity of the company "by most admired disorder," as he who digs to the foundation of a building to show its solidity, risks its falling. But a common-place is enshrined in its own unquestioned evidence, and constitutes its own immortal basis. Nature, it has been said, abhors a *vacuum:* and the House of Commons, it might be said, hates everything but a common-place!—Mr. Burke did not often shock the prejudices of the House: he endeavored to *account for them*, to "lay the flattering unction" of philosophy "to their souls." They could not endure him. Yet he did not attempt this by dry argument alone; he called to his aid the flowers of poetical fiction, and strewed the most dazzling colors of language over the Standing Orders of the House. It was a double offence to them—an aggravation of the encroachments of his genius. They would rather "hear a cat mew or an axle-tree grate," than hear a man talk philosophy by the hour—

> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns.

He was emphatically called the *Dinner-Bell*. They went out by shoals when he began to speak. They coughed and shuffled him down. While he was uttering some of the finest observations (to speak in compass) that ever were delivered in that House, they walked out, not as the beasts came out of the ark, by twos and by threes, but in droves and companies of tens, of dozens, and scores! Oh! it is "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," when you are in the middle of a delicate speculation to see "a robustious, periwig-pated fellow" deliberately take up his hat and walk out. But what effect could Burke's finest observations be expected to have on the House of Commons in their corporate capacity? On the supposition that they were original, refined, comprehensive, his auditors had never heard, and assuredly they had never thought of them before: how then should they know

that they were good or bad, till they had time to consider better of it, or till they were told what to think? In the mean time, their effect would be to stop the question: they were blanks in the debate: they could at best only be laid aside and left *ad referendum*. What would it signify if four or five persons, at the utmost, felt their full force and fascinating power the instant they were delivered? They would be utterly unintelligible to nine-tenths of the persons present, and their impression upon any particular individual, more knowing than the rest, would be involuntarily paralysed by the torpedo touch of the elbow of a country gentleman or city-orator. There is a reaction in insensibility as well as in enthusiasm; and men in society judge not by their own convictions, but by sympathy with others. In reading, we may go over the page again, whenever anything new or questionable "gives us pause:" besides, we are by ourselves, and it is *a word to the wise*. We are not afraid of understanding too much, and being called upon to unriddle. In hearing we are (saving the mark!) in the company of fools; and time presses. Was the debate to be suspended while Mr. Fox or Mr. Windham took this or that Honorable Member aside, to explain to them *that fine observation* of Mr. Burke's, and to watch over the new birth of their understandings, the dawn of this new light! If we were to wait till Noble Lords and Honorable Gentlemen were inspired with a relish for abstruse thinking, and a taste for the loftier flights of fancy, the business of this great nation would shortly be at a stand. No: it is too much to ask that our good things should be duly appreciated by the first person we meet, or in the next minute after their disclosure; if the world are a little, a very little, the wiser or better for them a century hence, it is full as much as can be modestly expected!—The impression of anything delivered in a large assembly must be comparatively null and void, unless you not only understand and feel its value yourself, but are conscious that it is felt and understood by the meanest capacity present. Till that is the case, the speaker is in your power, not you in his. The eloquence that is effectual and irresistible must stir the inert mass of prejudice, and pierce the opaquest shadows of ignorance. Corporate bodies move slow in the progress of intellect for this reason, that they must keep back, like convoys, for

the heaviest sailing vessels under their charge. The sinews of the wisest councils are, after all, impudence and interest: the most enlightened bodies are often but slaves of the weakest intellects they reckon among them, and the best-intentioned are but tools of the greatest hypocrites and knaves.—To conclude what I had to say on the character of Mr. Burke's parliamentary style, I will just give an instance of what I mean in affirming that it was too recondite for his hearers; and it shall be even in so obvious a thing as a quotation. Speaking of the new fangled French Constitution, and in particular of the King (Louis XVI.) as the chief power in form and appearance only, he repeated the famous lines in Milton describing Death, and concluded with peculiar emphasis,

—— What *seem'd* its head,
The *likeness* of a kingly crown had on.

The person who heard him make the speech said, that, if ever a poet's language had been finely applied by an orator to express his thoughts and make out his purpose, it was in this instance. The passage, I believe, is not in his reported speeches; and I should think, in all likelihood, it "fell still-born" from his lips; while one of Mr. Canning's well-thumbed quotations out of Virgil would electrify the Treasury Benches, and be echoed by all the politicians of his own standing, and the tyros of his own school, from Lord Liverpool in the Upper down to Mr. William Ward in the Lower House.

Mr. Burke was an author before he was a Member of Parliament: he ascended to that practical eminence from "the platform" of his literary pursuits. He walked out of his study into the House. But he never became a thorough-bred debater. He was not "native to that element," nor was he ever "subdued to the quality" of that motley crew of knights, citizens, and burgesses. The late Lord Chatham was made for, and by it. He seemed to vault into his seat there, like Hotspur, with the exclamation in his mouth—"that Roan shall be my throne." Or he sprang out of the genius of the House of Commons, like Pallas from the head of Jupiter, completely armed. He assumed an ascendency there from the very port and stature of his mind—

from his aspiring and fiery temperament. He vanquished, because he could not yield. He controlled the purposes of others, because he was strong in his own obdurate self-will. He convinced his followers, by never doubting himself. He did not argue, but assert; he took what he chose for granted, instead of making a question of it. He was not a dealer in *moot-points*. He seized on some strong-hold in the argument, and held it fast with a convulsive grasp—or wrested the weapons out of his adversaries' hands by main force. He entered the lists like a gladiator. He made political controversy a combat of personal skill and courage. He was not for wasting time in long-winded discussions with his opponents, but tried to disarm them by a word, by a glance of his eye, so that they should not dare to contradict or confront him again. He did not wheedle, or palliate, or circumvent, or make a studied appeal to the reason or the passions—he *dictated* his opinions to the House of Commons. "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—But if he did not produce such an effect either by reason or imagination, how did he produce it? The principle by which he exerted his influence over others (and it is a principle of which some speakers that I might mention seem not to have an idea, even in possibility) was sympathy. He himself evidently had a strong possession of his subject, a thorough conviction, an intense interest; and this communicated itself from his *manner*, from the tones of his voice, from his commanding attitudes, and eager gestures, instinctively and unavoidably to his hearers. His will was surcharged with electrical matter like a Voltaic battery; and all who stood within its reach felt the full force of the shock. Zeal will do more than knowledge. To say the truth, there is little knowledge,—no ingenuity, no parade of individual details, not much attempt at general argument, neither wit nor fancy in his speeches—but there are a few plain truths told home: whatever he says, he does not mince the matter, but clenches it in the most unequivocal manner, and with the fullest sense of its importance, in clear, short, pithy, old English sentences. The most obvious things, as he puts them, read like axioms—so that he appears, as it were, the genius of common sense personified; and in turning to his speeches you fancy that you have met with (at least) one honest

statesman!—Lord Chatham commenced his career in the intrigues of a camp and the bustle of a mess-room; where he probably learnt that the way to govern others, is to make your will your warrant, and your word a law. If he had spent the early part of his life, like Mr. Burke, in writing a treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, and in dreaming over the abstract nature and causes of things, he would never have taken the lead he did in the British Senate.

Both Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt (though as opposite to each other as possible) were essentially speakers, not authors, in their mode of oratory. Beyond the moment, beyond the occasion, beyond the immediate power shown, astonishing as that was, there was little remarkable or worth preserving in their speeches. There is no thought in them that implies a habit of deep and refined reflection (more than we are accustomed ordinarily to find in people of education); there is no knowledge that does not lie within the reach of obvious and mechanical search; and as to the powers of language, the chief miracle is, that a source of words so apt, forcible, and well-arranged, so copious and unfailing, should have been found constantly open to express their ideas without any previous preparation. Considered as written style, they are not far out of the common course of things; and perhaps it is assuming too much, and making the wonder greater than it is, with a very natural love of indulging our admiration of extraordinary persons, when we conceive that parliamentary speeches are in general delivered without any previous preparation. They do not, it is true, allow of preparation at the moment, but they have the preparation of the preceding night, and of the night before that, and of nights, weeks, months, and years of the same endless drudgery and routine, in going over the same subjects, argued (with some paltry difference) on the same grounds. *Practice makes perfect.* He who has got a speech by heart on any particular occasion, cannot be much gravelled for lack of matter on any similar occasion in future. Not only are the topics the same; the very same phrases—whole batches of them,—are served up as the Order of the Day; the same parliamentary bead-roll of grave impertinence is twanged off, in full cadence, by the Honorable Member or his Learned and Honorable Friend; and the well-known, voluminous,

calculable periods roll over the drowsy ears of the auditors, almost before they are delivered from the vapid tongue that utters them! It may appear, at first sight, that here are a number of persons got together, picked out from the whole nation, who can speak at all times upon all subjects in the most exemplary manner; but the fact is, they only repeat the same things over and over on the same subjects,—and they obtain credit for general capacity and ready wit, like Chaucer's Monk, who, by having three words of Latin always in his mouth, passed for a great scholar.

> A few termes coude he, two or three,
> That he had learned out of som decree;
> No wonder is, he herd it all the day.

Try them on any other subject *out of doors*, and see how soon the extempore wit and wisdom "will halt for it." See how few of those who have distinguished themselves *in* the House of Commons have done anything *out of it;* how few that have, shine *there!* Read over the collections of old Debates, twenty, forty, eighty, a hundred years ago; they are the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as those of yesterday. You wonder to see how little has been added; you grieve that so little has been lost. Even in their own favorite topics, how much are they to seek! They still talk gravely of the Sinking Fund in St. Stephen's Chapel, which has been for some time exploded as a juggle by Mr. Place of Charing-Cross; and a few of the principles of Adam Smith, which every one else had been acquainted with long since, are just now beginning to dawn on the collective understanding of the two Houses of Parliament. Instead of an exuberance of sumptuous matter, you have the same meagre standing dishes for every day in the year. You must serve an apprenticeship to a want of originality, to a suspension of thought and feeling. You are in a go-cart of prejudices, in a regularly constructed machine of pretexts and precedents; you are not only to wear the livery of other men's thoughts, but there is a House-of-Commons jargon which must be used for everything. A man of simplicity and independence of mind cannot easily reconcile himself to all this formality and mummery; yet wo to him that shall attempt to discard it! You can no more move against the stream of custom, than you can make

head against a crowd of people; the mob of lords and gentlemen will not let you speak or think but as they do. You are hemmed in, stifled, pinioned, pressed to death,—and if you make one false step, are "trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude!" Talk of mobs! Is there any body of people that has this character in a more consummate degree than the House of Commons? Is there any set of men that determines more by acclamation, and less by deliberation and individual conviction? That is moved more *en masse*, in its aggregate capacity, as brute force and physical number? That judges with more Midas ears, blind and sordid, without discrimination of right and wrong? The greatest test of courage I can conceive, is to speak truth in the House of Commons. I have heard Sir Francis Burdett say things there which I could not enough admire; and which he could not have ventured upon saying, if, besides his honesty, he had not been a man of fortune, of family, of character,—aye, and a very good-looking man into the bargain! Dr. Johnson had a wish to try his hand in the House of Commons. An elephant might as well have been introduced there, in all the forms: Sir William Curtis makes a better figure. Either he or the Speaker (Onslow) must have resigned. The orbit of his intellect was not the one in which the intellect of the house moved by ancient privilege. *His* common-places were not *their* common-places.—Even Horne Tooke failed, with all his *tact*, his self-possession, his ready talent, and his long practice at the hustings. He had weapons of his own, with which he wished to make play, and did not lay his hand upon the established levers for wielding the House of Commons. A succession of dry, sharp-pointed sayings, which come in excellently well in the pauses or quick turns of conversation, do not make a speech. A series of drops is not a stream. Besides, he had been in the practice of rallying his guests and tampering with his subject; and this ironical tone did not suit his new situation. He had been used to "give his own little Senate laws," and when he found the resistance of the great one more than he could manage, he shrank back from the attempt, disheartened and powerless. It is nothing that a man can talk (the better, the worse it is for him) unless he can talk in trammels; he must be drilled into the regiment; he must not run out of the

course! The worst thing a man can do is to set up for a wit there —or rather (I would say) for a humorist—to say odd out-of-the-way things, to ape a character, to play the clown or the wag in the House. This is the very forlorn hope of a parliamentary ambition. They may tolerate it till they know what you are at, but no longer. It may succeed once or twice, but the third time you will be sure to break your neck. They know nothing of you, or your whims, nor have they time to look at a puppet-show. "They look only at the stop-watch, my Lord!" We have seen a very lively sally of this sort which failed lately. The House of Commons is the last place where a man will draw admiration by making a jest of his own character. But if he has a mind to make a jest of humanity, of liberty, and of common sense and decency, he will succeed well enough!

The only person who ever "hit the House between wind and water" in this way,—who made sport for the Members, and kept his own dignity (in our time at least), was Mr. Windham. He carried on the traffic in parliamentary conundrums and enigmas with great *éclat* for more than one season. He mixed up a vein of characteristic eccentricity with a succession of far-fetched and curious speculations, very pleasantly. Extremes meet; and Mr. Windham overcame the obstinate attachment of his hearers to fixed opinions by the force of paradoxes. He startled his bed-rid audience effectually. A paradox was a treat to them, on the score of novelty at least; "the sight of one," according to the Scotch proverb, "was good for sore eyes." So Mr. Windham humored them in the thing for once. He took all sorts of commonly received doctrines and notions (with an understood reserve) —reversed them, and set up a fanciful theory of his own, instead. The changes were like those of a pantomime. Ask the first old woman you met her opinion on any subject, and you could get at the statesman's; for he would be just the contrary. He would be wiser than the old woman at any rate. If a thing had been thought cruel, he would prove that it was humane: if barbarous, manly; if wise, foolish; if sense, nonsense. His creed was the antithesis of common sense, loyalty excepted. Economy he could turn into ridicule, "as a saving of cheese-parings and candle-ends;"—and total failure was with him "negative success." He

had no occasion, for thus setting up for original thinking, to inquire into the truth or falsehood of any proposition, but to ascertain whether it was currently believed in, and then to contradict it point-blank. He made the vulgar prejudices of others "servile ministers" to his own solecisms. It was not easy to say whether he was in jest or earnest—but he contrived to hitch his extravagances into the midst of some grave debate; the House had their laugh for nothing; the question got into shape again, and Mr. Windham was allowed to have been more *brilliant* than ever.*

Mr. Windham was, I have heard, a silent man in company. Indeed his whole style was an artificial and studied imitation, or capricious caricature of Burke's bold, natural, discursive manner. This did not imply much spontaneous power or fertility of invention; he was an intellectual posture-master, rather than a man of real elasticity and vigor of mind. Mr. Pitt was also, I believe, somewhat taciturn and reserved. There was nothing clearly in the subject-matter of his speeches to connect with the ordinary topics of discourse, or with any given aspect of human life. One would expect him to be quite as much in the clouds as the automaton chess-player, or the last new Opera-singer. Mr. Fox said little in private, and complained that in writing he had no style. So (to compare great things with small) Jack Davies, the unrivalled racket-player, never said anything at all in company, and was what is understood by a modest man. When the racket was out of his hand, his occupation, his delight, his glory (that which he excelled all mankind in) was gone! So when Mr. Fox had no longer to keep up the ball of debate, with the floor of Saint Stephen's for a stage, and the world for spectators of the game, it is hardly to be wondered at that he felt a little at a loss—without his usual train of subjects, the same crowd of associations, the same spirit of competition, or stimulus to extraordinary exertion.

* It must be granted, however, that there was something *piquant* and provoking in his manner of "making the worse appear the better reason." In keeping off the ill odor of a bad cause, he applied hartshorn and burnt feathers to the offended sense; and did not, like Mr. Canning, treat us with the faded flowers of his oratory, like the faint smell of a perfumer's shop, or try to make Government "love-locks" of dead men's hair!

The excitement of leading in the House of Commons (which, in addition to the immediate attention and applause that follows, is a sort of whispering gallery to all Europe) must act upon the brain like brandy or laudanum upon the stomach; and must, in most cases, produce the same debilitating effects afterwards. A man's faculties must be quite exhausted, his virtue gone out of him. That any one accustomed all his life to the tributary roar of applause from the great council of the nation, should think of dieting himself with the prospect of posthumous fame as an author, is like offering a confirmed dram-drinker a glass of fair water for his morning's draught. Charles Fox is not to be blamed for having written an indifferent history of James II., but for having written a history at all. It was not his business to write a history —his business was *not to have made any more Coalitions!* But he found writing so dull, he thought it better to be a colleague of Lord Grenville! He did not want style (to say so is nonsense, because the style of his speeches was just and fine)—he wanted a sounding-board in the ear of posterity to try his periods upon. If he had gone to the House of Commons in the morning, and tried to make a speech fasting, when there was nobody to hear him, he might have been equally disconcerted at his want of style. The habit of speaking is the habit of being heard, and of wanting to be heard; the habit of writing is the habit of thinking aloud, but without the help of an echo. The orator sees his subject in the eager looks of his auditors; and feels doubly conscious, doubly impressed with it in the glow of their sympathy; the author can only look for encouragement in a blank piece of paper. The orator feels the impulse of popular enthusiasm,

——— like proud seas under him:

the only Pegasus the writer has to boast, is the hobby-horse of his own thoughts and fancies. How is he to get on then? From the lash of necessity. We accordingly see persons of rank and fortune continually volunteer into the service of oratory—and the State; but we have few authors who are not paid by the sheet! —I myself have heard Charles Fox engaged in familiar conversation. It was in the Louvre. He was describing the pictures

to two persons that were with him. He spoke rapidly, but very unaffectedly. I remember his saying—"All these blues and greens and reds are the Guercinos; you may know them by the colors." He set Opie right as to Domenichino's Saint Jerome. "You will find," he said, "though you may not be struck with it at first, that there is a great deal of truth and good sense in that picture." There was a person at one time a good deal with Mr. Fox, who, when the opinion of the latter was asked on any subject, very frequently interposed to give the answer. This sort of tantalizing interruption was ingeniously enough compared by some one, to walking up Ludgate-hill, and having the spire of St. Martin's constantly getting in your way, when you wish to see the dome of St. Paul's!—Burke, it is said, conversed as he spoke in public, and as he wrote. He was communicative, diffuse, magnificent. "What is the use," said Mr. Fox to a friend, "of Sheridan's trying to swell himself out in this manner, like the frog in the fable?"—alluding to his speech on Warren Hastings's trial. "It is very well for Burke to express himself in that figurative way. It is natural to him; he talks so to his wife, to his servants, to his children; but as for Sheridan, he either never opens his mouth at all, or if he does, it is to utter some joke. It is out of the question for him to affect these *Orientalisms*." Burke once came into Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting-room, when one of his pupils was sitting for one of the sons of Count Ugolino; this gentleman was personally introduced to him;—"Ah! then," said Burke, "I find that Mr. N— has not only a head that would do for Titian to paint, but is himself a painter." At another time, he came in when Goldsmith was there, and poured forth such a torrent of violent personal abuse against the King, that they got to high words, and Goldsmith threatened to leave the room if he did not desist. Goldsmith bore testimony to his powers of conversation. Speaking of Johnson, he said, "Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" With respect to his facility in composition, there are contradictory accounts. It has been stated by some, that he wrote out a plain sketch first, like a sort of dead coloring, and added the ornaments and tropes afterwards. I have been assured by a person who had the best means of knowing, that the *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the most rapid, impetu

ous, glancing, and sportive of all his works) was printed off, and the proof sent to him: and that it was returned to the printing-office with so many alterations and passages interlined, that the compositors refused to correct it as it was—took the whole matter in pieces, and re-set the copy. This looks like elaboration and after-thought. It was also one of Burke's latest compositions.* A regularly bred speaker would have made up his mind beforehand; but Burke's mind being, as originally constituted and by its first bias, that of an author, never became set. It was in further search and progress. It had an internal spring left. It was not tied down to the printer's form. It could still project itself into new beauties, and explore strange regions from the unwearied impulse of its own delight or curiosity. Perhaps among the passages interlined, in this case, were the description of the Duke of Bedford, as "the Leviathan among all the creatures of the crown,"—the *catalogue raisonnée* of the Abbé Sieyes's pigeon-holes,—or the comparison of the English Monarchy to "the proud keep of Windsor, with its double belt of kindred and coeval towers." Were these to be given up? If he had had to make his defence of his pension in the House of Lords, they would not have been ready in time, it appears; and, besides, would have been too difficult of execution on the spot: a speaker must not set his heart on such forbidden fruit. But Mr. Burke was an author, and the press did not "shut the gates of *genius* on mankind." A set of oratorical flourishes, indeed, is soon exhausted, and is generally all that the extempore speaker can safely aspire to. Not so with the resources of art or nature, which are inexhaustible, and which the writer has time to seek out, to embody, and to fit into shape and use, if he has the strength, the courage, and patience to do so.

There is then a certain range of thought and expression beyond the regular rhetorical routine, on which the author, to vindicate his title, must trench somewhat freely. The proof that this is understood to be so, is, that what is called an oratorical style is

* Tom Paine, while he was busy about any of his works, used to walk out, compose a sentence or paragraph in his head, come home and write it down, and never altered it afterwards. He then added another, and so on, till the whole was completed.

exploded from all good writing; that we immediately lay down an article, even in a common newspaper, in which such phrases occur as "the Angel of Reform," "the drooping Genius of Albion;" and that a very brilliant speech at a loyal dinner-party makes a very flimsy, insipid pamphlet. The orator has to get up for a certain occasion a striking compilation of partial topics, which, "to leave no rubs or botches in the work," must be pretty familiar, as well as palatable to his hearers; and in doing this, he may avail himself of all the resources of an artificial memory. The writer must be original, or he is nothing. He is not to take up with ready-made goods; for he has time allowed him to create his own materials, to make novel combinations of thought and fancy, to contend with unforeseen difficulties of style and execution, while we look on, and admire the growing work in secret and at leisure. There is a degree of finishing as well as of solid strength in writing, which is not to be got at every day, and we can wait for perfection. The author owes a debt to truth and nature which he cannot satisfy at sight, but he has pawned his head in redeeming it. It is not a string of clap-traps to answer a temporary or party-purpose,—violent, vulgar, and illiberal,—but general and lasting truth that we require at his hands. We go to him as pupils, not as partisans. We have a right to expect from him profounder views of things; finer observations; more ingenious illustrations; happier and bolder expressions. He is to give the choice and picked results of a whole life of study; what he has struck out in his most felicitous moods, has treasured up with most pride, has labored to bring to light with most anxiety and confidence of success. He may turn a period in his head fifty different ways, so that it comes out smooth and round at last. He may have caught a glimpse of a simile, and it may have vanished again: let him be on the watch for it, as the idle boy watches for the lurking-place of the adder. We can wait. He is not satisfied with a reason he has offered for something: let him wait till he finds a better reason. There is some word, some phrase, some idiom that expresses a particular idea better than any other, but he cannot for the life of him recollect it: let him wait till he does. Is it strange that among twenty thousand words in the English language, the one of all others that he most needs

should have escaped him? There are more things in nature than there are words in the English language, and he must not expect to lay rash hands on them all at once.

> Learn to *write* slow: all other graces
> Will follow in their proper places.

You allow a writer a year to think of a subject; he should not put you off with a truism at last. You allow him a year more to find out words for his thoughts; he should not give us an echo of all the fine things that have been said a hundred times.* All authors, however, are not so squeamish; but take up with words and ideas as they find them delivered down to them. Happy are they who write Latin verses! Who copy the style of Dr. Johnson! Who hold up the phrase of ancient Pistol! They do not trouble themselves with those hair-breadth distinctions of thought or meaning that puzzle nicer heads—let us leave them to their repose! A person in habits of composition often hesitates in conversation for a particular word: it is because he is in search of the best word, and *that* he cannot hit upon. In writing he would stop till it came.† It is not true, however, that the scholar could avail himself of a more ordinary word if he chose, or readily acquire a command of ordinary language; for his associations are habitually intense, not vague and shallow; and words occur to him only as *tallies* to certain modifications of feeling. They are links in the chain of thought. His imagination is fastidious, and rejects all those that are "of no mark or likelihood." Certain words are in his mind indissolubly wedded to certain things; and none are admitted at the *levée* of his thoughts, but those of which the banns have been solemnized with scrupulous propriety. Again, the student finds a stimulus to literary exertion, not in the immediate *éclat* of his undertaking, but in the difficulty of his subject, and the progressive nature of his task. He is not wound

* Just as a poet ought not to cheat us with lame metre and defective rhymes, which might be excusable in an improvisatori versifier.

† That is essentially a bad style which seems as if the person writing it never stopped for breath, nor gave himself a moment's pause, but strove to make up by redundancy and fluency for want of choice and correctness of expression

up to a sudden and extraordinary effort of presence of mind; but is for ever awake to the silent influxes of things, and his life is one long labor. Are there no sweeteners of his toil? No reflections, in the absence of popular applause or social indulgence, to cheer him on his way? Let the reader judge. *His* pleasure is the counterpart of, and borrowed from the same source as the writer's. A man does not read out of vanity, nor in company, but to amuse his own thoughts. If the reader, from disinterested and merely intellectual motives, relishes an author's "fancies and good nights," the last may be supposed to have relished them no less. If he laughs at a joke, the inventor chuckled over it to the full as much. If he is delighted with a phrase, he may be sure the writer jumped at it; if he is pleased to cull a straggling flower from the page, he may believe that it was plucked with no less fondness from the face of nature. Does he fasten, with gathering brow and looks intent, on some difficult speculation? He may be convinced that the writer thought it a fine thing to split his brain in solving so curious a problem, and to publish his discovery to the world. There is some satisfaction in the contemplation of power; there is also a little pride in the conscious possession of it. With what pleasure do we read books! If authors could but feel this, or remember what they themselves once felt, they would need no other temptation to persevere.

To conclude this account with what perhaps I ought to have set out with, a definition of the character of an author. There are persons who, in society, in public intercourse, feel no excitement,

> "Dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm,"

but who, when left alone, can lash themselves into a foam. They are never less alone than when alone. Mount them on a dinner-table, and they have nothing to say; shut them up in a room by themselves, and they are inspired. They are "made fierce with dark keeping." In revenge for being tongue-tied, a torrent of words flows from their pens, and the storm which was so long collecting comes down apace. It never rains but it pours. Is not this strange, unaccountable? Not at all so. They have

a real interest, a real knowledge of the subject, and they cannot summon up all that interest, or bring all that knowledge to bear, while they have anything else to attend to. Till they can do justice to the feeling they have, they can do nothing. For this they look into their own minds, not in the faces of a gaping multitude. What they would say (if they could) does not lie at the orifices of the mouth ready for delivery, but is wrapped in the folds of the heart and registered in the chambers of the brain. In the sacred cause of truth that stirs them, they would put their whole strength, their whole being into requisition; and as it implies a greater effort to drag their words and ideas from their lurking-places, so there is no end when they are once set in motion. The whole of a man's thoughts and feelings cannot lie on the surface, made up for use; but the whole must be a greater quantity, a mightier power, if they could be got at, layer under layer, and brought into play by the levers of imagination and reflection. Such a person then sees further and feels deeper than most others. He plucks up an argument by the roots, he tears out the very heart of his subject. He has more pride in conquering the difficulties of a question, than vanity in courting the favor of an audience. He wishes to satisfy himself before he pretends to enlighten the public. He takes an interest in things in the abstract more than by common consent. Nature is his mistress, truth his idol. The contemplation of a pure idea is the ruling passion of his breast. The intervention of other people's notions, the being the immediate object of their censure or their praise, puts him out. What will tell, what will produce an effect, he cares little about; and therefore he produces the greatest. The *personal* is to him an impertinence; so he conceals himself and writes. Solitude "becomes his glittering bride, and airy thoughts his children." Such a one is a true author; and not a member of any Debating Club, or Dilettanti Society whatever!*

* I have omitted to dwell on some other differences of body and mind that often prevent the same person from shining in both capacities of speaker and writer. There are natural impediments to public speaking such as the want of a strong voice and steady nerves. A high authority of the present day (Mr. Canning) has thought this a matter of so much import

ance, that he goes so far as even to let it affect the constitution of Parliament, and conceives that gentlemen who have not bold foreheads and brazen lungs, but modest pretensions and patriotic views, should be allowed to creep into the great assembly of the nation through the avenue of close boroughs, and not be called upon "to face the storms of the hustings." In this point of view, Stentor was a man of genius, and a noisy jack-pudding may cut a considerable figure in the "Political House that Jack built." I fancy Mr. C. Wynne is the only person in the kingdom who has fully made up his mind that a total defect of voice is the most necessary qualification for a Speaker of the House of Commons.

ESSAY XV.

On certain inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' discourses.

The two chief points which Sir Joshua aims at in his Discourses are to show that excellence in the Fine Arts is the result of pains and study, rather than of genius, and that all beauty, grace, and grandeur are to be found, not in actual nature, but in an idea existing in the mind. On both these points he appears to have fallen into considerable inconsistencies, or very great latitude of expression, so as to make it difficult to know what conclusion to draw from his various reasonings. I shall attempt little more in this Essay than to bring together several passages, that from their contradictory import seem to imply some radical defect in Sir Joshua's theory, and a doubt as to the possibility of placing an implicit reliance on his authority.

To begin with the first of these subjects, the question of original genius. In the Second Discourse, On the Method of Study, Sir Joshua observes towards the end,

"There is one precept, however, in which I shall only be opposed by the vain, the ignorant, and the idle. I am not afraid that I shall repeat it too often. *You must have no dependence on your own genius.* If you have great talents, industry will improve them: if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labor; nothing is to be obtained without it. Not to enter into metaphysical discussions on the nature or essence of genius, I will venture to assert, that assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of *natural powers.*"—Vol. i., p. 44.

The only tendency of the maxim here laid down seems to be to lure those students on with the hopes of excellence who have

no chance of succeeding, and to deter those who have, from relying on the only prop and source of real excellence—the strong bent and impulse of their natural powers. Industry alone can only produce mediocrity; but mediocrity in art is not worth the trouble of industry. Genius, great natural powers will give industry and ardor in the pursuit of their proper object, but not if you divert them from that object into the trammels of commonplace mechanical labor. By this method you neutralise all distinction of character—make a pedant of the blockhead, and a drudge of the man of genius. What, for instance, would have been the effect of persuading Hogarth or Rembrandt to place no dependence on their own genius, and to apply themselves to the general study of the different branches of the art and of every sort of excellence, with a confidence of success proportioned to their misguided efforts, but to destroy both those great artists? "You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house?" You undermine the superstructure of art when you strike at its main pillar and support, confidence and faith in nature. We might as well advise a person who had discovered a silver or a lead mine on his estate to close it up, or the common farmer to plough up every acre he rents in the hope of discovering hidden treasure, as advise the man of original genius to neglect his particular vein for the study of rules and the imitation of others, or try to persuade the man of no strong natural powers that he can supply their deficiency by laborious application.—Sir Joshua soon after, in the Third Discourse, alluding to the terms, *inspiration*, *genius*, *gusto*, applied by critics and orators to painting, proceeds,

"Such is the warmth with which both the Ancients and Moderns speak of this divine principle of the art; but, as I have formerly observed, enthusiastic admiration seldom promotes knowledge. Though a student by such praise may have his attention roused and a desire excited of running in this great career; yet it is possible that what has been said to excite, may only serve to deter him. He examines his own mind, and perceives there nothing of that divine inspiration, with which, he is told, so many others have been favored. He never travelled to heaven to gather new ideas; and he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications

than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer. Thus he becomes gloomy amidst the splendor of figurative declamation, and thinks it hopeless to pursue an object which he supposes out of the reach of human industry."—Vol. i., p. 56.

Yet presently after he adds,

"It is not easy to define in what this great style consists; nor to describe by words the proper means of acquiring it, *if the mind of the student should be at all capable of such an acquisition.* Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius."—*Ibid.*, p. 57.

Here then Sir Joshua admits that it is a question whether the student is likely *to be at all capable of such an acquisition* as the higher excellences of art, though he had said in the passage just quoted above, that it is within the reach of constant assiduity, and of a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, to effect all that is usually considered as the result of natural powers. Is the theory which our author means to inculcate a mere delusion, a mere arbitrary assumption? At one moment Sir Joshua attributes the hopelessness of the student to attain perfection to the discouraging influence of certain figurative and overstrained expressions, and in the next doubts his capacity for such an acquisition under any circumstances. Would he have him hope against hope, then? If he "examines his own mind and finds nothing there of that divine inspiration, with which he is told so many others have been favored," but which he has never felt himself; if "he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications" for the highest efforts of genius and imagination "than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer," he may as well desist at once from "ascending the brightest heaven of invention:"—if the very idea of the divinity of art deters instead of animating him, if the enthusiasm with which others speak of it damps the flame in his own breast, he had better not enter into a competition where he wants the first principle of success, the daring to aspire and the hope to excel. He may be assured he is not the man. Sir Joshua himself was not struck at first by the sight of the masterpieces of the great style of art, and he seems unconsciously to have adopted this theory to show that he might

still have succeeded in it but for want of due application. His hypothesis goes to this—to make the common run of his readers fancy they can do all that can be done by genius, and to make the man of genius believe he can only do what is to be done by mechanical rules and systematic industry. This is not a very feasible scheme; nor is Sir Joshua sufficiently clear and explicit in his reasoning in support of it.

In speaking of Carlo Maratti, he confesses the inefficiency of this doctrine in a very remarkable manner:—

"Carlo Maratti succeeded better than those I have first named, and I think owes his superiority to the extension of his views: besides his master Andrea Sacchi, he imitated Raffaelle, Guido, and the Caraccis. It is true, there is nothing very captivating in Carlo Maratti; but this proceeded from a want which cannot be completely supplied; that is, want of strength of parts. *In this certainly men are not equal;* and a man can bring home wares only in proportion to the capital with which he goes to market. Carlo, by diligence, made the most of what he had: but there was undoubtedly a heaviness about him, which extended itself uniformly to his invention, expression, his drawing, coloring, and the general effect of his pictures. The truth is, he never equalled any of his patterns in any one thing, and he added little of his own."—*Ibid.*, p. 172.

Here then Reynolds, we see, fairly gives up the argument. Carlo, after all, was a heavy hand; nor could all his diligence and his making the most of what he had, make up for the want of "natural powers." Sir Joshua's good sense pointed out to him the truth in the individual instance, though he might be led astray by a vague general theory. Such however is the effect of a false principle that there is an evident bias in the artist's mind to make genius lean upon others for support, instead of trusting to itself, and developing its own incommunicable resources. So in treating in the Twelfth Discourse of the way in which great artists are formed, Sir Joshua reverts very nearly to his first position.

"The daily food and nourishment of the mind of an Artist is found in the great works of his predecessors. There is no other way for him to become great himself. *Serpens, nisi serpentem*

comederit, non fit draco. Raffaelle, as it appears from what has been said, had carefully studied the works of Masaccio, and indeed there was no other, if we except Michael Angelo (whom he likewise imitated)* so worthy of his attention: and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal, and not enough diversified, according to the custom of Painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompany, and even sometimes proceed from, regularity and hardness of manner. We must consider the barbarous state of the arts before his time, when skill in drawing was so little understood, that the best of the painters could not even fore-shorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon his toes; and what served for drapery had, from the hardness and smallness of the folds, too much the appearance of cords clinging round the body. He first introduced large drapery, flowing in an easy and natural manner: indeed he appears to be the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the art afterwards arrived, and may therefore be justly considered as one of the Great Fathers of Modern Art.

"Though I have been led on to a longer digression respecting this great painter than I intended, yet I cannot avoid mentioning another excellence which he possessed in a very eminent degree; he was as much distinguished among his contemporaries for his diligence and industry, *as he was for the natural faculties of his mind.* We are told that his whole attention was absorbed in the pursuit of his art, and that he acquired the name of Masaccio from his total disregard to his dress, his person, and all the common concerns of life. He is indeed *a signal instance of what well-directed diligence* will do in a short time: he lived but twenty-seven years; yet in that short space carried the art so far beyond what it had before reached, that he appears to stand alone as a model for his successors. Vasari gives a long catalogue of painters and sculptors who formed their taste and learned their art, by studying his works; among those, he names Michael

* How careful is Sir Joshua, even in a parenthesis, to insinuate the obligations of this great genius to others, as if he would have been nothing without them!

Angelo, Lionardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, Raffaelle, Bartolomeo, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, and Pierino del Vaga."—Vol. ii., p. 95.

Sir Joshua here again halts between two opinions. He tells us the names of the painters who formed themselves upon Masaccio's style: he does not tell us on whom he formed himself. At one time the natural faculties of his mind were as remarkable as his industry; at another he was only a signal instance of what well-directed diligence will do in a short time. Then again "he appears to have been the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the Art afterwards arrived," though he is introduced in an argument to show that "the daily food and nourishment of the mind of the Artist must be found in the works of his predecessors." There is something surely very wavering and unsatisfactory in all this.

Sir Joshua, in another part of his work, endeavors to reconcile and prop up these contradictions by a paradoxical sophism which I think turns upon himself. He says, "I am on the contrary persuaded, that by imitation only" (by which he has just explained himself to mean the study of other masters) "variety and even originality of invention is produced. I will go further; even genius, at least what is so called, is the child of imitation. But as this appears to be contrary to the general opinion, I must explain my position before I enforce it.

"Genius is supposed to be a power of producing excellences which are out of the reach of the rules of art; a power which no precepts can teach, and which no industry can acquire.

"This opinion of the impossibility of acquiring those beauties, which stamp the work with the character of genius, supposes that it is something more fixed than in reality it is; and that we always do and ever did agree in opinion, with respect to what should be considered as the characteristic of genius. But the truth is, that the *degree* of excellence which proclaims *Genius* is different in different times and different places; and what shows it to be so is, that mankind have often changed their opinion upon this matter.

"When the Arts were in their infancy, the power of merely drawing the likeness of any object, was considered as one of its

greatest efforts. The common people, ignorant of the principles of art, talk the same language even to this day. But when it was found that every man could be taught to do this, and a great deal more, merely by the observance of certain precepts; the name of Genius then shifted its application, and was given only to him who added the peculiar character of the object he represented; to him who had invention, expression, grace, or dignity, in short, those qualities or excellences, the power of producing which could not *then* be taught by any known and promulgated rules.

"We are very sure that the beauty of form, the expression of the passions, the art of composition, even the power of giving a general air of grandeur to a work, is at present very much under the dominion of rules. These excellences were heretofore considered merely as the effects of genius; and justly, if genius is not taken for inspiration, but as the effect of close observation and experience."—THE SIXTH DISCOURSE, Vol. i., p. 153.

Sir Joshua began with undertaking to show that "genius was the child of the imitation of others; and now it turns out not to be inspiration indeed, but the effect of close observation and experience." The whole drift of this argument appears to be contrary to what the writer intended; for the obvious inference is that the essence of genius consists entirely, both in kind and degree, in the single circumstance of originality. The very same things are or are not genius, according as they proceed from invention or from mere imitation. In so far as a thing is original, as it has never been done before, it acquires and it deserves the appellation of genius: in so far as it is not original, and is borrowed from others or taught by rule, it is not, neither is it called, genius. This does not make much for the supposition that genius is a traditional and second-hand quality. Because, for example, a man without much genius can copy a picture of Michael Angelo's does it follow that there was no genius in the original design, or that the inventor and the copyist are equal? If indeed, as Sir Joshua labors to prove, mere imitation of existing models and attention to established rules could produce results exactly similar to those of natural powers, if the progress of art as a learned profession were a gradual but continual accumulation of individ-

ual excellence, instead of being a sudden and almost miraculous start to the highest beauty and grandeur nearly at first, and a regular declension to mediocrity ever after, then indeed the distinction between genius and imitation would be little worth contending for; the causes might be different, the effects would be the same, or rather skill to avail ourselves of external advantages would be of more importance and efficacy than the most powerful internal resources. But as the case stands, all the great works of art have been the offspring of individual genius, either projecting itself before the general advances of society or striking out a separate path for itself; and all the rest is but labor in vain. For every purpose of emulation or instruction, we go back to the original inventors, not to those who imitated, and as it is falsely pretended, improved upon their models: or if those who followed have at any time attained as high a rank or surpassed their predecessors, it was not from borrowing their excellences, but by unfolding new and exquisite powers of their own, of which the moving principle lay in the individual mind, and not in the stimulus afforded by previous example and general knowledge. Great faults, it is true, may be avoided, but great excellences can never be attained in this way. If Sir Joshua's hypothesis of progressive refinement in art was anything more than a verbal fallacy, why does he go back to Michael Angelo as the God of his idolatry? Why does he find fault with Carlo Maratti for being heavy? Or why does he declare as explicitly as truly, that "the judgment, after it had been long passive, by degrees loses its power of becoming active when exertion is necessary?" —Once more to point out the fluctuation in Sir Joshua's notions on this subject of the advantages of natural genius and artificial study, he says, when recommending the proper objects of ambition to the young artist—

"My advice in a word is this: keep your principal attention fixed upon the higher excellences. If you compass them, and compass nothing more, you are still in the first class. We may regret the innumerable beauties which you may want; you may be very imperfect; but still you are an imperfect artist of the highest order."—Vol. i., p. 116.

This is the Fifth Discourse. In the Seventh our artist seems

to waver, and fling a doubt on his former decision, whereby "it loses some color."

"Indeed perfection in an inferior style may be reasonably preferred to mediocrity in the highest walks of art. A landscape of Claude Lorraine *may** be preferred to a history by Luca Giordano: but hence appears the necessity of the connoisseur's knowing in what consists the excellency of each class, in order to judge how near it approaches to perfection."—*Ibid.*, p. 217.

As he advances, however, he grows bolder, and altogether discards his theory of judging of the artist by the class to which he belongs—"But we have seen the sanction of all mankind," he says, "in preferring genius in a lower rank of art, to feebleness and insipidity in the highest." This is in speaking of Gainsborough. The whole passage is excellent, and, I should think, conclusive against the general and factitious style of art on which he insists so much at other times.

"On this ground, however unsafe, I will venture to prophesy, that two of the last distinguished Painters of that country, I mean Pompeio Battoni, and Raffaelle Mengs, however great their names may at present sound in our ears,† will very soon fall into the rank of Imperiale, Sebastian Concha, Placido Constanza, Massuccio, and the rest of their immediate predecessors; whose names, though equally renowned in their life-time, are now fallen into what is little short of total oblivion. I do not say that those painters were not superior to the artist I allude to,‡ and whose loss we lament, in a certain routine of practice, which, to the eyes of common observers, has the air of a learned composition, and bears a sort of superficial resemblance to the manner of the great men who went before them. I know this perfectly well; but I know likewise, that a man looking for real and lasting reputation must unlearn much of the common-place method so observable in the works of the artists whom I have named. For my own part, I confess, I take more interest in and am more captivated with the powerful impression of nature, which Gainsborough exhibited

* If Sir Joshua had an offer to exchange a Luca Giordano in his collection for a Claude Lorraine, he would not have hesitated long about the preference.

† Written in 1788 ‡ Gainsborough

in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar-children, than with any of the works of that School, since the time of Andrea Sacchi, or perhaps we may say, Carlo Maratti; two painters who may truly be said to be ULTIMI ROMANORUM.

"I am well aware how much I lay myself open to the censure and ridicule of the Academical professors of other nations, in preferring the humble attempts of Gainsborough to the works of those regular graduates in the great historical style. *But we have the sanction of all mankind in preferring genius in a lower rank of art to feebleness and insipidity in the highest.*"—Vol. ii., p. 152.

Yet this excellent artist and critic had said but a few pages before, when working upon his theory—"For this reason I shall beg leave to lay before you a few thoughts on the subject; to throw out some hints that may lead your minds to an opinion (which I take to be the true one) that Painting is not only not to be considered as an imitation operating by deception, but that it is, and ought to be, in many points of view and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature. Perhaps it ought to be as far removed from the vulgar idea of imitation as the refined civilized state in which we live is removed from a gross state of nature; and those who have not cultivated their imaginations, which the majority of mankind certainly have not, may be said, in regard to arts, to continue in this state of nature. Such men will always prefer imitation" (the imitation of nature) "to that excellence which is addressed to another faculty that they do not possess; but these are not the persons to whom a painter is to look, any more than a judge of morals and manners ought to refer controverted points upon those subjects to the opinions of people taken from the banks of the Ohio, or from New Holland."—Vol. ii., p. 119.

In opposition to the sentiment here expressed, that "Painting is and ought to be, in many points of view and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature," it is emphatically said in another place—"Nature is and must be the fountain which alone is inexhaustible; and from which all excellences must originally flow."—Discourse VI. Vol. i., p. 162.

I cannot undertake to reconcile so many contradictions, nor do I think it an easy task for the student to derive any simple or intelligible clue from these conflicting authorities and broken hints in the prosecution of his art. Sir Joshua appears to have imbibed from others (Burke or Johnson) a spurious metaphysical notion that art was to be preferred to nature, and learning to genius, with which his own good sense and practical observation were continually at war, but from which he only emancipates himself for a moment to relapse into the same error again shortly after.* The conclusion of the Twelfth Discourse is, I think, however, a triumphant and unanswerable denunciation of his own favorite paradox on the objects and study of art.

"Those artists" (he says with a strain of eloquent truth), "who have quitted the service of nature (whose service, when well understood, is *perfect freedom*), and have put themselves under the direction of I know not what capricious fantastical mistress, who fascinates and overpowers their whole mind, and from whose dominion there are no hopes of their being ever reclaimed (since they appear perfectly satisfied, and not at all conscious of their forlorn situation), like the transformed followers of Comus,

> 'Not once perceived their foul disfigurement;
> But boast themselves more comely than before.'

"Methinks, such men, who have found out so short a path, have no reason to complain of the shortness of life and the extent of art; since life is so much longer than is wanted for their improvement, or is indeed necessary for the accomplishment of their idea of perfection.† On the contrary, he who recurs to nature, at every recurrence renews his strength. The rules of

* Sir Joshua himself wanted academic skill and patience in the details of his profession. From these defects he seems to have been alternately repelled by each theory and style of art, the simply natural and elaborately scientific, as it came before him; and in his impatience of each, to have been betrayed into a tissue of inconsistencies somewhat difficult to unravel.

† He had been before speaking of Boucher, Director of the French Academy, who told him that "when he was young, studying his art, he found it necessary to use models, but that he had left them off for many years."

art he is never likely to forget: they are few and simple: but Nature is refined, subtle, and infinitely various, beyond the power and retention of memory; it is necessary therefore to have continual recourse to her. In this intercourse, there is no end of his improvement: the longer he lives, the nearer he approaches to the true and perfect idea of Art."—Vol. ii., p. 108.

ESSAY XVI.

The same Subject continued.

The first inquiry which runs through Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses is, whether the student ought to look at nature with his own eyes or with the eyes of others, and on the whole, he apparently inclines to the latter. The second question is, what is to be understood by nature; whether it is a general and abstract idea, or an aggregate of particulars; and he strenuously maintains the former of these positions. Yet it is not easy always to determine how far or with what precise limitations he does so.

The first germ of his speculations on this subject is to be found in two papers in the Idler. In the last paragraph of the second of these, he says,

"If it has been proved that the Painter, by attending to the invariable and general ideas of nature, produces beauty, he must, by regarding minute particularities and accidental discriminations, deviate from the universal rule, and pollute his canvas with deformity."—See Works, Vol. ii., p. 242.

In answer to this, I would say that deformity is not the being varied in the particulars, in which all things differ (for on this principle all nature, which is made up of individuals, would be a heap of deformity), but in violating general rules, in which they all or almost all agree. Thus there are no two noses in the world exactly alike, or without a great variety of subordinate parts, which may still be handsome, but a face without any nose at all, or a nose (like that of a mask) without any particularity in the details, would be a great deformity in art or nature. Sir Joshua seems to have been led into his notions on this subject either by an ambiguity of terms, or by taking only one view of nature. He supposes grandeur, or the general effect of the whole, to consist in leaving out the particular details, because these details are sometimes found without any grandeur of effect, and he therefore

conceives the two things to be irreconcileable and the alternatives of each other. This is very imperfect reasoning. If the mere leaving out the details constituted grandeur, any one could do this: the greatest dauber would at that rate be the greatest artist. A house or sign-painter might instantly enter the lists with Michael Angelo, and might look down on the little, dry, hard manner of Raphael. But grandeur depends on a distinct principle of its own, not on a negation of the parts; and as it does not arise from their omission, so neither is it incompatible with their insertion or the highest finishing. In fact, an artist may give the minute particulars of any object one by one, and with the utmost care, and totally neglect the proportions, arrangement and general masses, on which the effect of the whole more immediately depends; or he may give the latter, viz., the proportions and arrangement of the larger parts and the general masses of light and shade, and leave all the minuter parts of which those parts are composed a mere blotch, one general smear, like the first crude and hasty getting in of the round-work of a picture: he may do either of these, or he may combine both, that is, finish the parts, but put them in their right places, and keep them in due subordination to the general effect and massing of the whole. If the exclusion of the parts were necessary to the grandeur of the whole composition, if the more entire this exclusion, if the more like a *tabula rasa*, a vague, undefined, shadowy and abstract representation the picture was, the greater the grandeur, there could be no danger of pushing this principle too far, and going the full length of Sir Joshua's theory without any restrictions or mental reservations. But neither of these suppositions is true. The greatest grandeur may co-exist with the most perfect, nay with a microscopic accuracy of detail, as we see it does often in nature: the greatest looseness and slovenliness of execution may be displayed without any grandeur at all either in the outline or distribution of the masses of color. To explain more particularly what I mean. I have seen and copied portraits by Titian, in which the eyebrows were marked with a number of small strokes, like hair lines (indeed, the hairs of which they were composed were in a great measure given)—but did this destroy the grandeur of expression, the truth of outline, arising from the arrangement of these hair-lines in a given form? The gran-

deur, the character, the expression remained, for the general form or arched and expanded outline remained, just as much as if it had been daubed in with a blacking-brush: the introduction of the internal parts and texture only added delicacy and truth to the general and striking effect of the whole. Surely a number of small dots or lines may be arranged into the form of a square or a circle indiscriminately; the square or circle, that is, the larger figure, remains the same, whether the line of which it consists is broken or continuous; as we may see in prints where the outlines, features, and masses remain the same in all varieties of mezzotinto, dotted and line engraving. If Titian in marking the appearance of the hairs had deranged the general shape and contour of the eyebrows, he would have destroyed the look of nature; but as he did not, but kept both in view, he proportionately improved his copy of it. So in what regards the masses of light and shade, the variety, the delicate transparency and broken transitions of the tints is not inconsistent with the greatest breadth or boldest contrasts. If the light, for instance, is thrown strongly on one side of a face, and the other is cast into deep shade, let the individual and various parts of the surface be finished with the most scrupulous exactness both in the drawing and in the colors: provided nature is not exceeded, this will not nor cannot destroy the force and harmony of the composition. One side of the face will still have that great and leading distinction of being seen in shadow, and the other of being seen in the light, let the subordinate differences be as many and as precise as they will. Suppose a panther is painted in the sun: will it be necessary to leave out the spots to produce breadth and the great style, or will this not be done more effectually by painting the spots on one side of his shaggy coat as they are seen in the light, and those of the other as they really appear in natural shadow? the two masses are thus preserved completely, and no offence is done to truth and nature. Otherwise we resolve the distribution of light and shade into *local coloring*. The masses, the grandeur exist equally in external nature with the local differences of different colors. Yet Sir Joshua seems to argue that the grandeur, the effect of the whole object, is confined to the general idea in the mind, and that all the littleness and individuality is in nature. This is an essen-

tially false view of the subject. This grandeur, this general effect, is indeed always combined with the details, or what our theoretical reasoner would designate as *littleness* in nature: and so it ought to be in art, as far as art can follow nature with prudence and profit. What is the fault of Denner's style? It is, that he does *not* give this combination of properties: that he gives only one view of nature, that he abstracts the details, the finishing, the curiosities of natural appearances from the general result, truth and character of the whole, and in finishing every part with elaborate care, totally loses sight of the more important and striking appearance of the object as it presents itself to us in nature. He gives every part of a face; but the shape, the expression, the light and shade of the whole is wrong, and as far as can be from what is natural. He gives an infinite variety of tints, but they are not the tints of the human face, nor are they subjected to any principle of light and shade. He is different from Rembrandt or Titian. The English school, formed on Sir Joshua's theory, give neither the finishing of the parts nor the effect of the whole, but an inexplicable dumb mass without distinction or meaning. They do not do as Denner did, and think that not to do as he did is to do as Titian and Rembrandt did; I do not know whether they would take it as a compliment to be supposed to imitate nature. Some few artists, it must be said, have "of late reformed this indifferently among us! Oh! let them reform it altogether!" I have no doubt they would if they could; but I have some doubts whether they can or not. Before I proceed to consider the question of beauty and grandeur as it relates to the selection of form, I will quote a few passages from Sir Joshua with reference to what has been said on the imitation of particular objects. In the Third Discourse he observes, "I will now add that nature herself is not to be too closely copied. . . . A mere copier of nature *can never produce anything great; can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator.* The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavoring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise by deceiving the

superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame by captivating the imagination."—Vol. i., p. 53.

From this passage it would surely seem that there was nothing in nature but minute neatness and superficial effect: nothing great in *her* style, for an imitator of it can produce nothing great; nothing "to enlarge the conceptions or warm the heart of the spectator."

"What word hath passed thy lips, Adam severe!"

All that is truly grand or excellent is a figment of the imagination, a vapid creation out of nothing, a pure effect of overlooking and scorning the minute neatness of natural objects. This will not do. Again, Sir Joshua lays it down without any qualification that

"The whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, peculiarities, and *details* of every kind."—Page 58.

Yet at p. 82 we find him acknowledging a different opinion.

"I am very ready to allow" (he says in speaking of history-painting) "that *some* circumstances of minuteness and particularity *frequently* tend to give an air of truth to a piece, and *to interest the spectator in an extraordinary manner*. Such circumstances therefore cannot wholly be rejected: but if there be anything in the Art which requires peculiar nicety of discernment, it is the disposition of these minute circumstantial parts; which, according to the judgment employed in the choice, become so useful to truth or so injurious to grandeur."—Page 82.

That's true; but the sweeping clause against "all particularities and details of every kind" is clearly got rid of. The undecided state of Sir Joshua's feelings on this subject of the incompatibility between the whole and the details is strikingly manifested in two short passages which follow each other in the space of two pages. Speaking of some pictures of Paul Veronese and Rubens as distinguished by the dexterity and the unity of style displayed in them, he adds—

"It is by this and this alone, that the mechanical power is ennobled, and raised much above its natural rank. And it appears to me, that with propriety it acquires this character, as an in-

stance of that superiority with which mind predominates over matter, by contracting into one whole what nature has made multifarious."—Vol. ii., p. 63.

This would imply that the principle of unity and integrity is only in the mind, and that nature is a heap of disjointed, disconnected particulars, a chaos of points and atoms. In the very next page, the following sentence occurs—

"As painting is an art, they" (the ignorant) "think they ought to be pleased in proportion as they see that art ostentatiously displayed; they will from this supposition prefer neatness, high finishing, and gaudy coloring, to the truth, simplicity and *unity* of nature."

Before, neatness and high finishing were supposed to belong exclusively to the littleness of nature, but here truth, simplicity and unity are her characteristics. Soon after, Sir Joshua says, "I should be sorry if what has been said should be understood to have any tendency to encourage that carelessness which leaves work in an unfinished state. I commend nothing for the want of exactness; I mean to point out that kind of exactness which is the best, and which is alone truly to be so esteemed."—Vol. ii., p. 65. This Sir Joshua has already told us consists in getting above "all particularities and details of every kind." Once more we find it is stated that

"It is in vain to attend to the variation of tints, if in that attention the general hue of flesh is lost; or to finish ever so minutely the parts, if the masses are not observed, or the whole not well put together."

Nothing can be truer: but why always suppose the two things at variance with each other?

Titian's manner was then new to the world, but that unshaken truth on which it is founded, has fixed it as a model to all succeeding painters; and those who will examine into the artifice, will find it to consist in the power of generalizing, and in the shortness and simplicity of the means employed."—Page 51.

Titian's real excellence consisted in the power of generalizing and of *individualizing* at the same time: if it were merely the former, it would be difficult to account for the error immediately

after pointed out by Sir Joshua. He says in the very next paragraph :

" Many artists, as Vasari likewise observes, have ignorantly imagined they are imitating the manner of Titian, when they leave their colors rough, and neglect the detail : but not possessing the principles on which he wrought, they have produced what he calls *goffe pitture*, absurd, foolish pictures."—*Ibid.*, p. 54.

Many artists have also imagined they were following the directions of Sir Joshua when they did the same thing, that is, neglected the detail, and produced the same results, vapid generalities, absurd, foolish pictures.

I will only give two short passages more, and have done with this part of the subject. I am anxious to confront Sir Joshua with his own authority.

" The advantage of this method of considering objects (*as a whole*) is what I wish now more particularly to enforce. At the same time I do not forget, that a painter must have the power of contracting as well as dilating his sight ; because he that does not at all express particulars, expresses nothing ; yet it is certain that a nice discrimination of minute circumstances, and a punctilious delineation of them, whatever excellence it may have (and I do not mean to detract from it), never did confer on the artist the character of Genius."—Vol. ii., p. 44.

At page 53, we find the following words .

" Whether it is the human figure, and animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing, however unpromising in appearance, but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment, and produce emotion, in the hands of a painter of genius. What was said of Virgil, that he threw even the dung about the ground with an air of dignity, may be applied to Titian ; whatever he touched, however naturally mean, and habitually familiar, by a kind of magic he invested with grandeur and importance." No, not by magic, but by seeking and finding in individual nature, and combined with details of every kind, that grace and grandeur and unity of effect which Sir Joshua supposes to be a mere creation of the artist's brain ! Titian's practice was, I conceive, to give general appearances with individual forms and circumstances : Sir Joshua's theory goes too often, and in its prevailing bias, to

separate the two things as inconsistent with each other, and thereby to destroy or bring into question that union of striking effect with accuracy of resemblance in which the essence of sound art (as far as relates to imitation) consists.

Farther, as Sir Joshua is inclined to merge the details of individual objects in general effect, so he is resolved to reduce all beauty or grandeur in natural objects to a central form or abstract idea of a certain class, so as to exclude all peculiarities or deviations from this ideal standard as unfit subjects for the artist's pencil, and as polluting his canvas with deformity. As the former principle went to destroy all exactness and solidity in particular things, this goes to confound all variety, distinctness, and characteristic force in the broader scale of nature. There is a principle of conformity in nature or of something in common between a number of individuals of the same class, but there is also a principle of contrast, of discrimination and identity, which is equally essential in the system of the universe and in the structure of our ideas both of art and nature. Sir Joshua would hardly neutralize the tints of the rainbow to produce a dingy grey, as a medium or central color: why then should he neutralize all features, forms, &c., to produce an insipid monotony? He does not indeed consider his theory of beauty as applicable to color, which he well understood, but insists upon, and literally enforces it as to form and ideal conceptions, of which he knew comparatively little, and where his authority is more questionable. I will not in this place undertake to show that his theory of a middle form (as the standard of taste and beauty) is not true of the outline of the human face and figure or other organic bodies, though I think that even there it is only one principle or condition of beauty; but I do say that it has little or nothing to do with those other capital parts of painting, color, character, expression, and grandeur of conception. Sir Joshua himself contends that "beauty in creatures of the same species is the medium or centre of all its various forms;" and he maintains that grandeur is the same abstraction of the species in the individual. Therefore beauty and grandeur must be the same thing, which they are not; so that this definition must be faulty. Grandeur I should suppose to imply something that elevates and expands the mind, which is

chiefly power or magnitude. Beauty is that which soothes and melts it, and its source I apprehend is a certain harmony, softness, and gradation of form, within the limits of our customary associations, no doubt, or of what we expect of certain species, but not independent of every other consideration. Our critic himself confesses of Michael Angelo, whom he regards as the pattern of the great and sublime style, that "his people are a superior order of beings; there is nothing about them, nothing in the air of their actions or their attitudes, or the style or cast of their limbs or features, that reminds us of their belonging to our own species. Raffaelle's imagination is not so elevated: his figures are not so much disjoined from our own diminutive race of beings, though his ideas are chaste, noble, and of great conformity to their subjects. Michael Angelo's works have a strong, peculiar, and marked character: they seem to proceed from his own mind entirely, and that mind so rich and abundant, that he never needed or seemed to disdain to look abroad for foreign help. Raffaelle's materials are generally borrowed, though the noble structure is his own." FIFTH DISCOURSE. How does all this accord with the same writer's favorite theory that all beauty, all grandeur, and all excellence, consist in an approximation to that central form or habitual idea of mediocrity, from which every deviation is so much deformity and littleness? Michael Angelo's figures are raised above our diminutive race of beings, yet they are confessedly the standard of sublimity in what regards the human form. Grandeur then admits of an exaggeration of our habitual impressions; and "the strong, marked, and peculiar character which Michael Angelo has at the same time given to his works," does not take away from it. This is fact against argument. I would take Sir Joshua's word for the goodness of a picture, and for its distinguishing properties, sooner than I would for an abstract metaphysical theory. Our artist also speaks continually of high and low subjects. There can be no distinction of this kind upon his principle, that the standard of taste is the adhering to the central form of each species, and that every species is in itself equally beautiful. The painter of flowers, of shells, or of anything else, is equally elevated with Raphael or Michael, if he adheres to the generic or established form of what he paints: the

rest, according to this definition, is a matter of indifference. There must therefore be something besides the central or customary form to account for the difference of dignity, for the high and low style in nature or in art. Michael Angelo's figures, we are told, are more than ordinarily grand: why, by the same rule, may not Raphael's be more than ordinarily beautiful, have more than ordinary softness, symmetry, and grace? Character and expression are still less included in the present theory. All character is a departure from the common-place form; and Sir Joshua makes no scruple to declare that expression destroys beauty. Thus he says,

"If you mean to preserve the most perfect beauty *in its most perfect state*, you cannot express the passions, all of which produce distortion and deformity, more or less, in the most beautiful faces."—Vol. i., p. 118.

He goes on—"Guido, from want of choice in adapting his subject to his ideas and his powers, or from attempting to preserve beauty where it could not be preserved, has in this respect succeeded very ill. His figures are often engaged in subjects that required great expression: yet his Judith and Holofernes, the daughter of Herodias with the Baptist's head, the Andromeda, and some even of the Mothers of the Innocents, have little more expression than his Venus attired by the Graces."—*Ibid.*

What a censure is this passed upon Guido, and what a condemnation of his own theory, which would reduce and level all that is truly great and praiseworthy in art to this insipid, tasteless standard, by setting aside as illegitimate all that does not come within the middle, central form! Yet Sir Joshua judges of Hogarth as he deviates from this standard, not as he excels in individual character, which he says is only good or tolerable as it partakes of general nature; and he might accuse Michael Angelo and Raphael, the one for his grandeur of style, the other for his expression; for neither are what he sets up as the goal of perfection. I will just stop to remark here, that Sir Joshua has committed himself very strangely in speaking of the character and expression to be found in the Greek statues. He says in one place—

"I cannot quit the Apollo, without making one observation on

the character of this figure. He is supposed to have just discharged his arrow at the Python; and by the head retreating a little towards the right shoulder, he appears attentive to its effect. What I would remark, is the difference of this attention from that of the Discobolus, who is engaged in the same purpose, watching the effect of his Discus. The graceful, negligent, though animated air of the one, and the vulgar eagerness of the other, furnish an instance of the judgment of the ancient Sculptors *in their nice discrimination of character*. They are both equally true to nature, and equally admirable."—Vol. ii., p. 21.

After a few observations on the limited means of the art of Sculpture, and the inattention of the ancients to almost everything but form, we meet with the following passage:—

"Those who think Sculpture can express more than we have allowed may ask, by what means we discover, at the first glance, the character that is represented in a Bust, a Cameo, or Intaglio? I suspect it will be found, on close examination, by him who is resolved not to see more than he really does see, that the figures are distinguished by their *insignia* more than by any variety of form or beauty. Take from Apollo his Lyre, from Bacchus his Thyrsus and Vine-leaves, and Meleager the Boar's Head, and there will remain little or no difference in their characters. In a Juno, Minerva, or Flora, the idea of the artist seems to have gone no further than representing perfect beauty, and afterwards adding the proper attributes, with a total indifference to which they gave them."

[What then becomes of that "nice discrimination of character" for which our author has just before celebrated them?]

"Thus John De Bologna, after he had finished a group of a young man holding up a young woman in his arms, with an old man at his feet, called his friends together, to tell him what name he should give it, and it was agreed to call it The Rape of the Sabines; and this is the celebrated group which now stands before the old Palace at Florence. The figures have the same general expression which is to be found in most of the antique Sculpture; and yet it would be no wonder, if future critics should find out delicacy of expression which was never intended; and go so far as to see, in the old man's countenance, the exac

relation which he bore to the woman who appears to be taken from him."—*Ibid.*, p. 25.

So it is that Sir Joshua's theory seems to rest on an inclined plane, and is always glad of an excuse to slide, from the severity of truth and nature, into the milder and more equable regions of insipidity and inanity! I am sorry to say so, but so it appears to me.

I confess, it strikes me as a self-evident truth that variety or contrast is as essential a principle in art and nature as uniformity, and as necessary to make up the harmony of the universe and the contentment of the mind. Who would destroy the shifting effects of light and shade, the sharp, lively opposition of colors in the same or in different objects, the streaks in a flower, the stains in a piece of marble, to reduce all to the same neutral, dead coloring, the same middle tint? Yet it is on this principle that Sir Joshua would get rid of all variety, character, expression, and picturesque effect in forms, or at least measure the worth or the spuriousness of all these according to their reference to or departure from a given or average standard. Surely, nature is more liberal, art is wider than Sir Joshua's theory. Allow (for the sake of argument) that all forms are in themselves indifferent, and that beauty or the sense of pleasure in forms can therefore only arise from customary association, or from that middle impression to which they all tend: yet this cannot by the same rule apply to other things. Suppose there is no capacity in form to affect the mind except from its corresponding to previous expectation, the same thing cannot be said of power or grandeur. No one can say that the idea of power does not affect the mind with the sense of awe and sublimity. That is, power and weakness, grandeur and littleness, are not indifferent things, the perfection of which consists in a medium between both. Again, expression is not a thing indifferent in itself, which derives its value or its interest solely from its conformity to a neutral standard. Who would neutralize the expression of pleasure and pain? Or say that the passions of the human mind, pity, love, joy, sorrow, &c., are only interesting to the imagination and worth the attention of the artist, as he can reduce them to an equivocal state which is neither pleasant nor painful, neither one thing nor the other? Or who would stop

short of the utmost refinement, precision, and force in the delineation of each? Ideal expression is not neutral expression, but extreme expression. Again, character is a thing of peculiarity, of striking contrast, of distinction, and not of uniformity. It is necessarily opposed to Sir Joshua's exclusive theory, and yet it is surely a curious and interesting field of speculation for the human mind. Lively, spirited discrimination of character is one source of gratification to the lover of nature and art, which it could not be, if all truth and excellence consisted in rejecting individual traits. Ideal character is not common-place, but consistent character marked throughout, which may take place in history or portrait. Historical truth in a picture is the putting the different features of the face or muscles of the body into consistent action. The *picturesque* altogether depends on particular points or qualities of an object, projecting as it were beyond the middle line of beauty, and catching the eye of the spectator. It was less, however, my intention to hazard any speculations of my own, than to confirm the common-sense feelings on the subject by Sir Joshua's own admissions in different places. In the Tenth Discourse, speaking of some objections to the Apollo, he has these remarkable words:—

"In regard to the last objection (*viz.* that the lower half of the figure is longer than just proportion allows) it must be remembered, that Apollo is here in the exertion of *one of his peculiar powers*, which is swiftness; he has therefore that proportion which is best adapted to that character. This is no more incorrectness, than where there is given to an Hercules an extraordinary swelling and strength of muscles."—Vol. ii., p. 20.

Strength and activity then do not depend on the middle form; and the middle form is to be sacrificed to the representation of these positive qualities. Character is thus allowed not only to be an integrant part of the antique and classical style of art, but even to take precedence of and set aside the abstract idea of beauty. Little more would be required to justify Hogarth in his Gothic resolution, that if he were to make a figure of Charon, he would give him bandy legs, because watermen are generally bandy-legged. It is very well to talk of the abstract idea of a man or of a God, but if you come to anything like an intelligible

proposition, you must either individualize and define, or destroy the very idea you contemplate. Sir Joshua goes into this question at considerable length in the Third Discourse.

"To the principle I have laid down, that the idea of beauty in each species of beings is an invariable one, it may be objected," he says, "that in every particular species there are various central forms, which are separate and distinct from each other, and yet are undeniably beautiful; that in the human figure, for instance, the beauty of Hercules is one, of the Gladiator another, of the Apollo another, which makes so many different ideas of beauty. It is true, indeed, that these figures are each perfect in their kind, though of different characters and proportions; but still none of them is the representation of an individual, but of a class. And as there is one general form, which, as I have said, belongs to the human kind at large, so in each of these classes there is one common idea which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class. Thus, though the forms of childhood and age differ exceedingly, there is a common form in childhood, and a common form in age, which is the more perfect as it is remote from all peculiarities. But I must add further, that though the most perfect forms of each of the general divisions of the human figure are ideal, and superior to any individual form of that class; yet the highest perfection of the human figure is not to be found in any of them. It is not in the Hercules, nor in the Gladiator, nor in the Apollo; but in that form which is taken from all, and which partakes equally of the activity of the Gladiator, of the delicacy of the Apollo, and of the muscular strength of the Hercules. For perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species. It cannot consist in any one to the exclusion of the rest: no one, therefore, must be predominant, that no one may be deficient."—Vol. ii., p. 64.

Sir Joshua here supposes the distinctions of classes and character to be necessarily combined with the general leading idea of a middle form. This middle form is not to confound age, sex, circumstance, under one sweeping abstraction: but we must limit the general idea by certain specific differences and characteristic marks, belonging to the several subordinate divisions and ramifi-

cations of each class. This is enough to show that there is a principle of individuality as well as of abstraction inseparable from works of art as well as nature. We are to keep the human form distinct from that of other living beings, that of men from that of women; we are to distinguish between age and infancy, between thoughtfulness and gaiety, between strength and softness. Where is this to stop? But Sir Joshua turns round upon himself in this very passage, and says, "No: we are to unite the strength of the Hercules with the delicacy of the Apollo; for perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species." Now if these different characters are beautiful in themselves, why not give them for their own sakes and in their most striking appearances, instead of qualifying and softening them down in a neutral form; which must produce a compromise, not a union of different excellences. If all excess of beauty, if all character is deformity, then we must try to lose it as fast as possible in other qualities. But if strength is an excellence, if activity is an excellence, if delicacy is an excellence, then the perfection, *i. e.* the highest degree of each of these qualities cannot be attained but by remaining satisfied with a less degree of the rest. But let us hear what Sir Joshua himself advances on this subject in another part of the Discourses.

"Some excellences bear to be united, and are improved by union: others are of a discordant nature: and the attempt to unite them only produces a harsh jarring of incongruent principles. The attempt to unite contrary excellences (of form, for instance*) in a single figure, *can never escape degenerating into the monstrous but by sinking into the insipid; by taking away its marked character, and weakening its expression.*

"Obvious as these remarks appear, there are many writers on our art, who not being of the profession, and consequently not knowing what can or cannot be done, have been very liberal of absurd praises in their description of favorite works. They always find in them what they are resolved to find. They praise excellences that can hardly exist together; and above all things are fond of describing with great exactness the expression of a mixed

* These are Sir Joshua's words.

passion, which more particularly appears to me out of the reach of our art.*

"Such are many disquisitions which I have read on some of the Cartoons and other pictures of Raffaelle, where the critics have described their own imaginations; or indeed where the excellent master himself may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of the art; and has, therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every imagination with equal probability to find a passion of his own. What has been, and what can be done in the art, is sufficiently difficult: we need not be mortified or discouraged at not being able to execute the conceptions of a romantic imagination. Art has its boundaries, though imagination has none. We can easily, like the ancients, suppose a Jupiter to be possessed of all those powers and perfections which the subordinate Deities were endowed with separately. Yet when they employed their art to represent him, they confined his character to majesty alone. Pliny, therefore, though we are under great obligations to him for the information he has given us in relation to the works of the ancient artists, is very frequently wrong when he speaks of them, which he does very often, in the style of many of our modern connoisseurs. He observes that in a statue of Paris, by Euphranor, you might discover at the same time three different characters; the dignity of a Judge of the Goddesses, the Lover of Helen, and the Conqueror of Achilles. A statue in which you endeavor to unite stately dignity, youthful elegance, and stern valor, must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree.

"From hence it appears, that there is much difficulty as well as danger in an endeavor to concentrate in a single subject those various powers, which, rising from various points, naturally move in different directions."—Vol. i., p. 120.

What real clue to the art or sound principles of judging the student can derive from these contradictory statements, or in what manner it is possible to reconcile them one to the other, I confess I am at a loss to discover. As it appears to me, all the varieties

* I do not know that: but I do not think the two passions could be expressed by expressing neither or something between both.

of nature in the infinite number of its qualities, combinations, characters, expressions, incidents, &c., rise from distinct points or centres, and must move in distinct directions, as the forms of different species are to be referred to a separate standard. It is the object of art to bring them out in all their force, clearness, and precision, and not to blend them into a vague, vapid, nondescript *ideal* conception, which pretends to unite, but in reality destroys. Sir Joshua's theory limits nature and paralyzes art. According to him, the middle form or the average of our various impressions is the source from which all beauty, pleasure, interest, imagination springs. I contend, on the contrary, that this very variety is good in itself, nor do I agree with him that the whole of nature as it exists in fact is stark naught, and that there is nothing worthy of the contemplation of a wise man but that *ideal perfection* which never existed in the world nor even on canvas. There is something fastidious and sickly in Sir Joshua's system. His code of taste consists too much of negations, and not enough of positive, prominent qualities. It accounts for nothing but the beauty of the common Antique, and hardly for that. The merit of Hogarth, I grant, is different from that of the Greek statues ; but I deny that Hogarth is to be measured by this standard, or by Sir Joshua's middle forms : he has powers of instruction and amusement that "rising from a different point, naturally move in a different direction," and completely attain their end. It would be just as reasonable to condemn a comedy for not having the pathos of a tragedy or the stateliness of an epic poem. If Sir Joshua Reynolds's theory were true, Dr. Johnson's Irene would be a better tragedy than any of Shakspeare's.

The reasoning of the Discourses is, I think then, deficient in the following particulars:

1. It seems to imply that general effect in a picture is produced by leaving out the details, whereas the largest masses and the grandest outline are consistent with the utmost delicacy of finishing in the parts.

2. It makes no distinction between beauty and grandeur, but refers both to an *ideal* or middle form, as the centre of the various forms of the species, and yet inconsistently attributes the grandeur

of Michael Angelo's style to the superhuman appearance of his prophets and apostles.

3. It does not at any time make mention of power or magnitude in an object as a distinct source of the sublime (though this is acknowledged unintentionally in the case of Michael Angelo, &c.), nor of softness or symmetry of form as a distinct source of beauty, independently of, though still in connection with another source arising from what we are accustomed to expect from each individual species.

4. Sir Joshua's theory does not leave room for character, but rejects it as an anomaly.

5. It does not point out the source of expression, but considers it as hostile to beauty ; and yet, lastly, he allows that the middle form, carried to the utmost theoretical extent, neither defined by character, nor impregnated by passion, would produce nothing but vague, insipid, unmeaning generality.

In a word, I cannot think that the theory here laid down is clear and satisfactory, that it is consistent with itself, that it accounts for the various excellences of art from a few simple principles, or that the method which Sir Joshua has pursued in treating the subject is, as he himself expresses it, "*a plain and honest method.*" It is, I fear, more calculated to baffle and perplex the student in his progress, than to give him clear lights as to the object he should have in view, or to furnish him with strong motives of emulation to attain it.

ESSAY XVII.

On the Qualifications necessary to Success in Life.

It is curious to consider the diversity of men's talents, and the causes of their failure or success, which are not less numerous and contradictory than their pursuits in life. Fortune does not always smile on merit:—"the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:" and even where the candidate for wealth or honors succeeds, it is as often, perhaps, from the qualifications which he wants as from those which he possesses; or the eminence which he is lucky enough to obtain, is owing to some faculty or acquirement, which neither he nor anybody else suspected. There is a balance of power in the human mind, by which defects frequently assist in furthering our views, as superfluous excellences are converted into the nature of impediments; and again, there is a continual substitution of one talent for another, through which we mistake the appearance for the reality, and judge (by implication) of the means from the end. So a Minister of State wields the House of Commons by his *manner* alone; while his friends and his foes are equally at a loss to account for his influence, looking for it in vain in the matter or style of his speeches. So the air with which a celebrated barrister waved a white cambric handkerchief passed for eloquence. So the buffoon is taken for a wit. To be thought wise, it is for the most part necessary only to seem so; and the noisy demagogue is easily translated, by the popular voice, into the orator and patriot. Qualities take their color from those that are next to them, as the cameleon borrows its hue from the nearest object; and unable otherwise to grasp the phantom of our choice or our ambition, we do well to lay violent hands on something else within our reach, which bears a general resemblance to it; and the im-

pression of which, in proportion as the thing itself is cheap and worthless, is likely to be gross, obvious, striking, and effectual. The way to secure success, is to be more anxious about obtaining than about deserving it; the surest hindrance to it is to have too high an opinion of the discernment of the public. He who is determined not to be satisfied with anything short of perfection, will never do anything at all, either to please himself or others. The question is not what we ought to do, but what we *can* do for the best. An excess of modesty is in fact an excess of pride, and more hurtful to the individual, and less advantageous to society, than the grossest and most unblushing vanity—

> Aspiring to be Gods, if angels fell,
> Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.

If a celebrated artist in our own day had stayed to do justice to his principal figure in a generally admired painting, before he had exhibited it, it would never have seen the light. He has passed on to other things more within his power to accomplish, and more within the competence of the spectators to understand. They see what he has done, which is a great deal—they could not have judged of, or given him credit for the *ineffable idea* in his own mind, which he might vainly have devoted his whole life in endeavoring to embody. The picture, as it is, is good enough for the age and the public. If it had been ten times better, its merits would have been thrown away: and if it had been ten times better in the more refined and lofty conception of character and sentiment, and had failed in the more palpable appeal to the senses and prejudices of the vulgar, in the usual "appliances and means to boot," it would never have done. The work might have been praised by a few, a very few, and the artist himself have pined in penury and neglect. Mr. Wordsworth has given us the *essence* of poetry in his works, without the machinery, the apparatus of poetical diction, the theatrical pomp, the conventional ornaments; and we see what he has made of it.

The way to fame, through merit alone, is the narrowest, the steepest, the longest, the hardest of all others—(that it is the most certain and lasting, is even a doubt)—the most sterling reputation is, after all, but a species of imposture. As for ordinary cases of

success and failure, they depend on the slightest shades of character or turn of accident—"some trick not worth an egg"—

> There's but the twinkling of a star
> Betwixt a man of peace and war;
> A thief and justice, fool and knave,
> A huffing officer and a slave;
> A crafty lawyer and pick-pocket,
> A great philosopher and a blockhead;
> A formal preacher and a player,
> A learned physician and manslayer.

Men are in numberless instances qualified for certain things, for no other reason than because they are qualified for nothing else. Negative merit is the passport for negative success. In common life, the narrowness of our ideas and appetites is more favorable to the accomplishment of our designs, by confining our attention and ambition to one single object, than a greater enlargement of comprehension or susceptibility of taste, which (as far as the trammels of custom and routine of business are concerned) only operate as diversions to our ensuring the *main chance;* and, even in the pursuit of arts and science, a dull plodding fellow will often do better than one of a more mercurial and fiery cast—the mere unconsciousness of his own deficiencies, or of anything beyond what he himself can do, reconciles him to his mechanical progress, and enables him to perform all that lies in his power with labor and patience. By being content with mediocrity, he advances beyond it; whereas the man of greater taste or genius may be supposed to fling down his pen or pencil in despair, haunted with the idea of unattainable excellence, and ends in being nothing, because he cannot be everything at once. Those even who have done the greatest things, were not always perhaps the greatest men. To do any given work, a man should not be greater in himself than the work he has to do; the faculties which he has beyond this, will be *faculties to let*, either not used, or used idly or unprofitably, to hinder, not to help. To do any one thing best, there should be an exclusiveness, a concentration, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment to that one object; so that the widest range of knowledge and most diffusive subtlety of intellect will not uniformly produce the most beneficial results;—and the performance is very frequent-

y in the inverse ratio, not only of the pretensions, as we might superficially conclude, but of the real capacity. *A part is greater than the whole:* and this old saying seems to hold true in moral and intellectual questions also—in nearly all that relates to the mind of man, which cannot embrace the whole, but only a part.

I do not think (to give an instance of what I mean) that Milton's mind was (so to speak) greater than the Paradise Lost; it was just big enough to fill that mighty mould; the shrine contained the Godhead. Shakspeare's genius was, I should say, greater than anything he has done, because it still soared free and unconfined beyond whatever he undertook—ran over, and could not be "constrained by mastery" of his subject. Goldsmith, in his Retaliation, celebrates Burke as one who was kept back in his dazzling, wayward career, by the supererogation of his talents—

> Though equal to all things, for all things unfit,
> Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit.

Dr. Johnson, in Boswell's Life, tells us that the only person whose conversation he ever *sought* for improvement was George Psalmanazar: yet who knows anything of this extraordinary man now, but that he wrote about twenty volumes of the Universal History—invented a Formosan alphabet and vocabulary—being a really learned man, contrived to pass for an impostor, and died no one knows how or where! The well known author of the "Inquiry concerning Political Justice," in conversation has not a word to throw at a dog; all the stores of his understanding or genius he reserves for his books, and he has need of them, otherwise there would be *hiatus in manuscriptis*. He says little, and that little were better left alone, being both dull and nonsensical; his talk is as flat as a pancake, and there is no leaven in it, he has not dough enough to make a loaf and a cake; he has no idea of anything till he has wound up, like a clock, not to speak, but to write, and then he seems like a person risen from sleep or from the dead. The author of the *Diversions of Purley*, on the other hand, besides being the inventor of the theory of grammar, was a politician, a wit, a master of conversation, and overflowing with

an *interminable babble*—that fellow had cut and come again in him, and

"Tongue with a garnish of brains;"

but it only served as an excuse to cheat posterity of the definition of a verb, one of those conversational *ruses de guerre* by which he put off his guests at Wimbledom with some teasing equivoque which he would explain the next time they met—and made him die at last with a nostrum in his mouth! The late Professor Porson was said to be a match for the Member for Old Sarum in argument and raillery:—he was a profound scholar, and had wit at will—yet what did he come to? His jests have evaporated with the marks of the wine on the tavern table; the page of Thucydides or Æschylus, which was stamped on his brain, and which he could read there with equal facility backwards or forwards, is contained, after his death, as it was while he lived, just as well in the volume on the library shelf. The man of perhaps the greatest ability now living is the one who has not only done the least, but who is actually incapable of ever doing anything worthy of him—unless he had a hundred hands to write with, and a hundred mouths to utter all that it hath entered into his heart to conceive, and centuries before him to embody the endless volumes of his waking dreams. Cloud rolls over cloud; one train of thought suggests and is driven away by another; theory after theory is spun out of the bowels of his brain, not like the spider's web, compact and round, a citadel and a snare, built for mischief and for use; but, like the gossamer, stretched out and entangled without end, clinging to every casual object, flitting in the idle air, and glittering only in the ray of fancy. No subject can come amiss to him, and he is alike attracted and alike indifferent to all—he is not tied down to any one in particular—but floats from one to another, his mind everywhere finding its level, and feeling no limit but that of thought—now soaring with its head above the stars, now treading with fairy feet among flowers, now winnowing the air with winged words—passing from Duns Scotus to Jacob Behmen, from the Kantean philosophy to a conundrum, and from the Apocalypse to an acrostic—taking in the whole range of poetry, painting, wit, history, politics, metaphysics, criticism, and private

scandal—every question giving birth to some new thought, and every thought "discoursed in eloquent music," that lives only in the ear of fools, or in the report of absent friends. Set him to write a book, and he belies all that has been ever said about him—

> Ten thousand great ideas filled his mind,
> But with the clouds they fled, and left no trace behind.

Now there is ———, who never had an idea in his life, and who therefore has never been prevented by the fastidious refinements of self-knowledge, or the dangerous seductions of the Muse, from succeeding in a number of things which he has attempted, to the utmost extent of his dulness, and contrary to the advice and opinion of all his friends. He has written a book without being able to spell, by dint of asking questions—has painted draperies with great exactness, which have passed for finished portraits—daubs in an unaccountable figure or two, with a background, and on due deliberation calls it history—he is dubbed an Associate after being twenty times black-balled, wins his way to the highest honors of the Academy, through all the gradations of discomfiture and disgrace, and may end in being made a foreign Count! And yet (such is the principle of distributive justice in matters of taste) he is just where he was. We judge of men not by what they do, but by what they are. *Non ex quovis ligno fit Mercurius.* Having once got an idea of ———, it is impossible that anything he can do should ever alter it—though he were to paint like Raphael and Michael Angelo, no one in the secret would give him credit for it, and "though he had all knowledge, and could speak with the tongues of angels," yet without genius he would be nothing. The original sin of being what he is, renders his good works and most meritorious efforts null and void. "You cannot gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Nature still prevails over art. You look at ———, as you do at a curious machine, which performs certain puzzling operations, and as your surprise ceases, gradually unfolds other powers which you would little expect—but do what it will, it is but a machine still; the *thing* is without a soul!

Respice finem, is the great rule in all practical pursuits: to

attain our journey's end, we should look little to the right or to the left; the knowledge of excellence as often deters and distracts, as it stimulates the mind to exertion; and hence we may see some reason, why the general diffusion of taste and liberal arts is not always accompanied with an increase of individual genius.

As there is a degree of dulness and phlegm, which, in the long run, sometimes succeeds better than the more noble and aspiring impulses of our nature (as the beagle by its sure tracing overtakes the bounding stag) so there is a degree of animal spirits and showy accomplishment, which enables its possessors "to get the start of the majestic world," and bear the palm alone. How often do we see vivacity and impertinence mistaken for wit; fluency for argument; sound for sense; a loud or musical voice for eloquence! Impudence again is an equivalent for courage; and the assumption of merit and the possession of it are too often considered as one and the same thing. On the other hand, simplicity of manner reduces the person who cannot so far forego his native disposition as by any effort to shake it off, to perfect insignificance in the eyes of the vulgar, who, if you do not seem to doubt your own pretensions, will never question them; and on the same principle, if you do not try to palm yourself on them for what you are not, will never be persuaded you can be anything. Admiration, like mocking, is catching: and the good opinion which gets abroad of us begins at home. If a man is not as much astonished at his own acquirements—as proud of and as delighted with the bauble, as others would be if put into sudden possession of it, they hold that true desert and he must be strangers to each other: if he entertains an idea beyond his own immediate profession or pursuit, they think very wisely he can know nothing at all: if he does not play off the quack or the coxcomb upon them at every step, they are confident he is a dunce and a fellow of no pretensions. It has been sometimes made a matter of surprise that Mr. Pitt did not talk politics out of the House; or that Mr. Fox conversed like any one else on common subjects; or that Walter Scott is fonder of an old Scotch ditty or antiquarian record, than of listening to the praises of the Author of Waverley. On the contrary, I cannot conceive how

any one who feels conscious of certain powers, should always be laboring to convince others of the fact; or how a person, to whom their exercise is as familiar as the breath he draws, should think it worth his while to convince them of what to him must seem so very simple, and at the same time, so very evident. I should not wonder, however, if the Author of the Scotch Novels laid an undue stress on the praises of the Monastery. We nurse the ricketty child, and prop up our want of self-confidence by the opinion of friends. A man (unless he is a fool) is never *vain*, but when he stands in need of the tribute of adulation to strengthen the hollowness of his pretensions; nor *conceited*, but when he can find no one to flatter him, and is obliged secretly to pamper his good opinion of himself, to make up for the want of sympathy in others. A *damned* author has the highest sense of his own merits, and an inexpressible contempt for the judgment of his contemporaries; in the same manner that an actor who is hissed or hooted from the stage, creeps into exquisite favor with himself, in proportion to the blindness and injustice of the public. A prose-writer, who has been severely handled in the Reviews, will try to persuade himself that there is nobody else who can write a word of English: and we have seen a poet of our time, whose works have been much, but not (as he thought) sufficiently admired, undertake formally to prove, that no poet, who deserved the name of one, was ever popular in his life-time, or scarcely after his death!

There is nothing that floats a man sooner into the tide of reputation, or oftener passes current for genius, than what might be called *constitutional talent*. A man without this, whatever may be his worth or real powers, will no more get on in the world than a leaden Mercury will fly into the air; as any pretender with it, and with no one quality beside to recommend him, will be sure either to blunder upon success, or will set failure at defiance. By constitutional talent I mean, in general, the warmth and vigor given to a man's ideas and pursuits by his bodily *stamina*, by mere physical organization. A weak mind in a sound body is better, or at least more profitable, than a sound mind in a weak and crazy conformation. How many instances might I quote! Let a man have a quick circulation, a good digestion, the bulk,

and thews, and sinews of a man, and the alacrity, the unthinking confidence inspired by these; and without an atom, a shadow of the *mens divinior*, he shall strut, and swagger, and vapor and jostle his way through life, and have the upper-hand of those who are his betters in everything but health and strength. His jests shall be echoed with loud laughter, because his own lungs begin to crow like chanticleer, before he has uttered them; while a little hectic nervous humorist shall stammer out an admirable conceit that is damned in the doubtful delivery—*vox faucibus hæsit*.—The first shall tell a story as long as his arm, without interruption, while the latter stops short in his attempts from mere weakness of chest: the one shall be empty and noisy and successful in argument, putting forth the most common-place things "with a confident brow and a throng of words, that come with more than impudent sauciness from him," while the latter shrinks from an observation "too deep for his hearers," into the delicacy and unnoticed retirement of his own mind. The one shall never feel the want of intellectual resources, because he can *back* his opinions with his person; the other shall lose the advantages of mental superiority, seek to anticipate contempt by giving offence, court mortification in despair of popularity, and even in the midst of public and private admiration, extorted slowly by incontrovertible proofs of genius, shall never get rid of the awkward, uneasy sense of personal weakness and insignificance, contracted by early and long-continued habit. What imports the inward to the outward man, when it is the last that is the general and inevitable butt of ridicule or object of admiration?—It has been said that a good face is a letter of recommendation. But the finest face will not carry a man far, unless it is set upon an active body, and a stout pair of shoulders. The countenance is the index of a man's talents and attainments: his figure is the criterion of his progress through life. We may have seen faces that spoke "a soul as fair—

"Bright as the children of yon azure sheen"—

yet that met with but an indifferent reception in the world—and that being supported by a couple of spindle-shanks and a weak stomach, in fulfilling what was expected of them,

"Fell flat, and shamed their worshippers."

Hence the successes of such persons did not correspond with their deserts. There was a natural contradiction between the physiognomy of their minds and bodies! The phrase, "a good-looking man," means different things in town and country; and artists have a separate standard of beauty from other people. A country-squire is thought good-looking, who is in good condition like his horse: a country-farmer, to take the neighbors' eyes, must seem stall fed, like the prize-ox; they ask, "how he cuts up in the caul, how he tallows in the kidneys." The *letter-of-recommendation* face, in general, is not one that expresses the finer movements of thought or of the soul, but that makes part of a vigorous and healthy form. It is one in which Cupid and Mars take up their quarters, rather than Saturn or Mercury. It may be objected here that some of the greatest favorites of fortune have been little men. "A little man, but of high fancy," is Sterne's description of Mr. Hammond Shandy. But then they have been possessed of strong fibres and an iron constitution. The late Mr. West said, that Bonaparte was the best made man he ever saw in his life. In other cases the gauntlet of contempt which a puny body and a fiery spirit are forced to run, may determine the possessors to aim at great actions; indignation may make men heroes as well as poets, and thus revenge them on the niggardliness of nature and the prejudices of the world. I remember Mr. Wordsworth's saying, that he thought ingenious poets had been of small and delicate frames, like Pope; but that the greatest (such as Shakspeare and Milton) had been healthy, and cast in a larger and handsomer mould. So were Titian, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. This is one of the few observations of Mr. Wordsworth's I recollect worth quoting, and I accordingly set it down as his, because I understand he is tenacious on that point.

In love, in war, in conversation, in business, confidence and resolution are the principal things. Hence the poet's reasoning:

> "For women, born to be controll'd,
> Affect the loud, the vain, the bold."

Nor is this peculiar to them, but runs all through life. It is the opinion we appear to entertain of ourselves, from which (thinking we must be the best judges of our own merits) others accept [illegible]

idea of us on trust. It is taken for granted that every one pretends to the utmost he can do, and he who pretends to little, is supposed capable of nothing. The humility of our approaches to power or beauty ensures a repulse, and the repulse makes us unwilling to renew the application; for there is pride as well as humility in this habitual backwardness and reserve. If you do not bully the world, they will be sure to insult over you, because they think they can do it with impunity. They insist upon the arrogant assumption of superiority somewhere, and if you do not prevent them, they will practise it on you. Some one must top the part of Captain in the play. Servility however chimes in, and plays Scrub in the farce. Men patronize the fawning and obsequious, as they submit to the vain and boastful. It is the air of modesty and independence, which will neither be put upon itself, nor put upon others, that they cannot endure—that excites all the indignation they should feel for pompous affectation, and all the contempt they do not show to meanness and duplicity. Our indolence, and perhaps our envy take part with our cowardice and vanity in all this. The obtrusive claims of empty ostentation, played off like the ring on the finger, fluttering and sparkling in our sight, relieve us from the irksome task of seeking out obscure merit: the scroll of virtues written on the bold front, or triumphing in the laughing eye, save us the trouble of sifting the evidence and deciding for ourselves: besides, our self-love receives a less sensible shock from encountering the mere semblance than the solid substance of worth; folly chuckles to find the blockhead put over the wise man's head, and cunning winks to see the knave, by his own good leave, transformed into a saint.

> "Doubtless, the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat."

In all cases, there seems a sort of compromise, a principle of collusion between imposture and credulity. If you ask what sort of adventurers have swindled tradesmen of their goods, you will find they are all *likely* men, with plausible manners or a handsome equipage, hired on purpose:—if you ask what sort of gallants have robbed women of their hearts, you will find they are those who

nave jilted hundreds before, from which the willing fair conceives the project of fixing the truant to herself—so the bird flutters its idle wings in the jaws of destruction, and the foolish moth rushes into the flame that consumes it! *There is no trusting to appearances*, we are told; but this maxim is of no avail, for men are the eager dupes of them. Life, it has been said, is "the art of being well deceived;" and accordingly, hypocrisy seems to be the great business of mankind. The game of fortune is, for the most part, set up with counters; so that he who will not cut in because he has no gold in his pocket, must sit out above half his time, and lose his chance of sweeping the tables. Delicacy is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, considered as rusticity; and sincerity of purpose is the greatest affront that can be offered to society. To insist on simple truth, is to disqualify yourself for place or patronage—the less you deserve, the more merit in their encouraging you; and he who, in the struggle for distinction, trusts to realities and not to appearances, will in the end find himself the object of universal hatred and scorn. A man who thinks to gain and keep the public ear by the force of style, will find it very uphill work; if you wish to pass for a great author, you ought not to look as if you were ignorant that you had ever written a sentence or discovered a single truth. If you keep your own secret, be assured the world will keep it for you. A writer, whom I know very well, cannot gain an admission to Drury-lane Theatre, because he does not lounge into the lobbies, or sup at the Shakspeare—nay, the same person having written upwards of sixty columns of original matter on politics, criticism, belles-lettres, and *virtù* in a respectable Morning Paper, in a single half-year, was, at the end of that period, on applying for a renewal of his engagement, told by the Editor "he might give in a specimen of what he could do!" One would think sixty columns of the Morning Chronicle were a sufficient specimen of what a man could do But while this person was thinking of his next answer to Vetus, or his account of Mr. Kean's performance of Hamlet, he had neglected "to point the toe," to hold up his head higher than usual (having acquired a habit of poring over books when young), and to get a new velvet collar to an old-fashioned great coat. These are "the graceful ornaments to the columns of a newspaper—the

Corinthian capitals of a polished style!" This unprofitable servant of the press found no difference in himself before or after he became known to the readers of the Morning Chronicle, and it accordingly made no difference in his appearance or pretensions. "Don't you remember," says Gray, in one of his letters, "Lord C—— and Lord M——, who are now great statesmen, little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my own part, I don't feel myself a bit taller, or older, or wiser, than I did then." It is no wonder that a poet, who thought in this manner of himself, was hunted from college to college,—has left us so few precious specimens of his fine powers, and shrunk from his reputation into a silent grave!

"I never knew a man of genius a coxcomb in dress," said a man of genius and a sloven in dress. I *do* know a man of genius who is a coxcomb in his dress, and in everything else. But let that pass.

"C'est un mauvais métier que celui de médire."

I also know an artist who has at least the ambition and the boldness of genius, who has been reproached with being a coxcomb, and with affecting singularity in his dress and demeanor. If he is a coxcomb that way, he is not so in himself, but a rattling hare-brained fellow, with a great deal of unconstrained gaiety, and impetuous (not to say turbulent) life of mind! Happy it is when a man's exuberance of self-love flies off to the circumference of a broad-brimmed hat, descends to the toes of his shoes, or carries itself off with the peculiarity of his gait, or even vents itself in a little professional quackery;—and when he seems to think sometimes of you, sometimes of himself, and sometimes of others, and you do not feel it necessary to pay to him all the finical devotion, or to submit to be treated with the scornful neglect of a proud beauty, or some Prince Prettyman. It is well to be something besides the coxcomb, for our own sake as well as that of others; but to be born wholly without this faculty or gift of Providence, a man had better have had a stone tied about his neck, and been cast into the sea.

In general, the consciousness of internal power leads rather to

a disregard of, than a studied attention to external appearance. The wear and tear of the mind does not improve the sleekness of the skin, or the elasticity of the muscles. The burden of thought weighs down the body like a porter's burden. A man cannot stand so upright or move so briskly under it as if he had nothing to carry in his head or on his shoulders. The rose on the cheek and the canker at the heart do not flourish at the same time; and he who has much to think of, must take many things to heart; for thought and feeling are one. He who can truly say, *Nihil humani a me alienum puto*, has a world of cares on his hands, which nobody knows anything of but himself. This is not one of the least miseries of a studious life. The common herd do not by any means give him full credit for his gratuitous sympathy with their concerns; but are struck with his lack-lustre eye and wasted appearance. They cannot translate the expression of his countenance out of the vulgate; they mistake the knitting of his brows for the frown of displeasure, the paleness of study for the languor of sickness, the furrows of thought for the regular approaches of old age. They read his looks, not his books; have no clue to penetrate the last recesses of the mind, and attribute the height of abstraction to more than an ordinary share of stupidity. "Mr. —— never seems to take the slightest interest in anything," is a remark I have often heard made in a whisper. People do not like your philosopher at all, for he does not look, say, or think as they do; and they respect him still less. The majority go by personal appearances, not by proofs of intellectual power; and they are quite right in this, for they are better judges of the one than of the other. There is a large party who undervalue Mr. Kean's acting (and very properly, as far as they are concerned), for they can see that he is a little ill-made man, but they are incapable of entering into the depth and height of the passion in his Othello. A nobleman of high rank, sense, and merit, who had accepted an order of knighthood, on being challenged for so doing by a friend, as a thing rather degrading to him than otherwise, made answer—"What you say, may be very true; but I am a little man, and am sometimes jostled, and treated with very little ceremony in walking along the streets; now the advantage of this new honor will be that when people see the star at my breast,

they will every one make way for me with the greatest respect.' Pope bent himself double and ruined his constitution by over-study when young. He was hardly indemnified by all his posthumous fame, "the flattery that soothes the dull cold ear of death," nor by the admiration of his friends, nor the friendship of the great, for the distortion of his person, the want of robust health, and the insignificant figure he made in the eyes of strangers, and of Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Not only was his diminutive and misshapen form against him in such trivial toys, but it was made a set-off and a bar to his poetical pretensions by his brother-poets, who ingeniously converted the initial and final letters of his name into the invidious appellation A. P. E. He probably had the passage made under-ground from his garden to his grotto, that he might not be rudely gazed at in crossing the road by some untutored clown; and perhaps started to see the worm he trod upon writhed into his own form, like Elshie the Black Dwarf. Let those who think the mind everything and the body nothing, "ere we have shuffled off this mortal coil," read that fine moral fiction, or the real story of David Ritchie—believe and tremble![*]

It may be urged that there is a remedy for all this in the appeal from the ignorant many to the enlightened few. But the few who are judges of what is called real and solid merit, are not forward to communicate their occult discoveries to others: they are withheld partly by envy, and partly by pusillanimity. The strongest minds are by rights the most independent and ingenuous: but then they are competitors in the lists, and jealous of the prize.

[*] It is more desirable to be the handsomest than the wisest man in his Majesty's dominions, for there are more people who have eyes than understandings. Sir John Suckling tells us that

> He prized black eyes and a lucky hit
> At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.

In like manner, I would be permitted to say, that I am somewhat sick of this trade of authorship, where the critics look askance at one's best-meant efforts, but am still fond of those athletic exercises, where they do not keep two scores to mark the game, with Whig and Tory notches. The accomplishments of the body are obvious and clear to all: those of the mind are recondite and doubtful, and therefore grudgingly acknowledged, or held up as the sport of prejudice, spite, and folly.

The prudent (and the wise are prudent!) only add their hearty applause to the acclamations of the multitude, which they can neither silence nor dispute. So Mr. Gifford dedicated those verses to Mr. Hoppner, when securely seated on the heights of fame and fortune, which before he thought might have savored too much of flattery or friendship. Those even who have the sagacity to discover it, seldom volunteer to introduce obscure merit into publicity, so as to endanger their own pretensions: they praise the world's idols, and bow down at the altars which they cannot overturn by violence or undermine by stealth! Suppose literary men to be the judges and vouchers for literary merit:—but it may sometimes happen that a literary man (however high in genius or in fame) has no passion but the love of distinction, and hates every person or thing that interferes with his inadmissible and exorbitant claims. Dead to every other interest, he is alive to that, and starts up, like a serpent when trod upon, out of the slumber of wounded pride. The cold slime of indifference is turned into rank poison at the sight of your approach to an equality or competition with himself. If he is an old acquaintance, he would keep you always where you were, under his feet to be trampled on: if a new one, he wonders he never heard of you before. As you become known, he expresses a greater contempt for you, and grows more captious and uneasy. The more you strive to merit his good word, the farther you are from it. Such characters will not only sneer at your well-meant endeavors, and keep silent as to your good qualities, but are out of countenance, "quite chop-fallen," if they find you have a cup of water, or a crust of bread. It is only when you are in a jail, starved or dead, that their exclusive pretensions are safe, or their Argus-eyed suspicions laid asleep. This is a true copy, nor is it taken from one sitting, or a single subject.—An author now-a-days, to succeed, must be something more than an author,—a nobleman, or rich plebeian: the simple literary character is not enough. "Such a poor forked animal," as a mere poet or philosopher turned loose upon public opinion, has no chance against the flocks of bats and owls that instantly assail him. It is name, it is wealth, it is title and influence that mollifies the tender-hearted Cerberus of criticism—first, by placing the honorary candidate for fame out of the reach of Grub-

street malice; secondly, by holding out the prospect of a dinner or a vacant office to successful sycophancy. This is the reason why a certain Magazine praises Percy Bysshe Shelley, and vilifies "Johnny Keats:"* they know very well that they cannot ruin the one in fortune as well as in fame, but they may ruin the other in both, deprive him of a livelihood together with his good name, send him *to Coventry*, and into the Rules of a prison; and this is a double incitement to the exercise of their laudable and legitimate vocation. We do not hear that they plead the good-natured motive of the Editor of the Quarterly Review, that "they did it for his good," because some one, in consequence of that critic's abuse, had sent the author a present of five-and-twenty pounds! One of these writers went so far, in a sort of general profession of literary servility, as to declare broadly that there had been no great English poet, and that no one had a right to pretend to the character of a man of genius in this country, who was not of patrician birth—or connexions by marriage! This hook was well baited.

> These are the *doctrines* that enrich the shops,
> That pass with reputation through the land,
> And bring their authors an immortal name.

It is the sympathy of the public with the spite, jealousy, and irritable humors of the writers, that nourishes this disease in the public mind; this "embalms and spices to the April day again," what otherwise "the spital and the lazar-house would heave the gorge at!"

* Written in June, 1820.

ESSAY XVIII.

Madame Pasta and Mademoiselle Mars.

I LIKED Mademoiselle Mars exceedingly well, till I saw Madame Pasta whom I liked so much better. The reason is, the one is the perfection of French, the other of natural acting. Madame Pasta is Italian, and she might be English—Mademoiselle Mars belongs emphatically to her country; the scene of her triumphs is Paris. She plays naturally too, but it is French nature. Let me explain. She has, it is true, none of the vices of the French theatre, its extravagance, its flutter, its grimace, and affectation, but her merit in these respects is as it were negative, and she seems to put an artificial restraint upon herself. There is still a pettiness, an attention to *minutiæ*, an etiquette, a mannerism about her acting: she does not give an entire loose to her feelings, or trust to the unpremeditated and habitual impulse of her situation. She has greater elegance, perhaps, and precision of style than Madame Pasta, but not half her boldness or grace. In short, everything she does is voluntary, instead of being spontaneous. It seems as if she might be acting from marginal directions to her part. When not speaking, she stands in general quite still. When she speaks, she extends first one hand and then the other, in a way that you can foresee every time she does so, or in which a machine might be elaborately constructed to develope different successive movements. When she enters, she advances in a straight line from the other end to the middle of the stage with the slight unvarying trip of her country-women, and then stops short, as if under the drill of a *fugal-man*. When she speaks, she articulates with perfect clearness and propriety, but it is the facility of a singer executing a difficult passage. The case is that of habit not of nature. Whatever she does, is right in the intention, and she takes care not to carry it too far; but she

appears to say beforehand, "*This* I will do, I must not do *that*." Her acting is an inimitable study or consummate rehearsal of the part as a preparatory performance: she hardly yet appears to have assumed the character; something more is wanting, and that something you find in Madame Pasta. If Mademoiselle Mars has to smile, a slight and evanescent expression of pleasure passes across the surface of her face; twinkles in her eyelids, dimples her chin, compresses her lips, and plays on each feature: when Madame Pasta smiles, a beam of joy seems to have struck upon her heart, and to irradiate her countenance. Her whole face is bathed and melted in expression, instead of its glancing from particular points. When she speaks, it is in music. When she moves, it is without thinking whether she is graceful or not. When she weeps, it is a fountain of tears, not a few trickling drops, that glitter and vanish the instant after. The French themselves admire Madame Pasta's acting (who indeed can help it?) but they go away thinking how much one of her simple movements would be improved by their extravagant gesticulations, and that her noble, natural expression would be the better for having twenty airs of mincing affectation added to it. In her Nina there is a listless vacancy, an awkward grace, a want of *bienséance*, that is like a child or a changeling, and that no French actress would venture upon for a moment, lest she should be suspected of a want of *esprit* or of *bon mien*. A French actress always plays before the court; she is always in the presence of an audience, with whom she first settles her personal pretensions by a significant hint or side-glance, and then as much nature and simplicity as you please. Poor Madame Pasta thinks no more of the audience than Nina herself would, if she could be observed by stealth, or than the fawn that wounded comes to drink, or the flower that droops in the sun or wags its sweet head in the gale. She gives herself entirely up to the impression of the part, loses her power over herself, is led away by her feelings either to an expression of stupor or of artless joy, borrows beauty from deformity, charms unconsciously, and is transformed into the very being she represents. She does not act the character—she *is* it, looks it, breathes it. She does not study for an effect, but strives to possess herself of the feeling which should dictate what she is

to do, and which gives birth to the proper degree of grace, dignity, ease, or force. She makes no point all the way through, but her whole style and manner is in perfect keeping, as if she were really a love-sick, care-crazed maiden, occupied with one deep sorrow, and who had no other idea or interest in the world. This alone is true nature and true art. The rest is sophistical; and French art is not free from the imputation; it never places an implicit faith in nature, but always mixes up a certain portion of art, that is of consciousness and affectation with it. I shall illustrate this subject from a passage in Shakspeare.

" *Polixenes.*—Shepherdess,
(A fair one are you) well you fit our ages
With flow'rs of winter.
Perdita.—Sir, the year growing ancient,
Nor yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gilliflowers,
Which some call nature's bastards; of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren, and I care not
To get slips of them.
Polix.—Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?
Perdita.—For I have heard it said,
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.
Polix.—Say, there be,
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; so o'er that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art,
That nature makes; you see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
Which does mend nature, change it rather; but
The art itself is nature.
Perdita.—So it is.
Polix.—Then make your garden rich in gilliflowers,
And do not call them bastards.
Perdita.—I'll not put
A dibble in earth, to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I should wish
This youth to say, 'twere well; and only therefore
Desire to breed by me."—*Winter's Tale, Act IV.*

Madame Pasta appears to be of Perdita's mind in respect to her acting, and I applaud her resolution heartily. We English are charged unjustly with wishing to disparage the French: we cannot help it; there is a natural antipathy between the two nations. Thus unable to deny their theatrical merit, we are said insidiously to have invented the appellation, *French nature*, to explain away or throw a stigma on their most successful exertions:

—— "Though that their art be nature,
We throw such changes of vexation on it,
As it may lose some color."

The English are a heavy people, and the most like a stone of all others. The French are a lively people, and more like a feather. They are easily moved and by slight causes, and each part of the impression has its separate effect: the English, if they are moved at all (which is a work of time and difficulty), are moved altogether, or in mass, and the impression, if it takes root, strikes deep and spreads wide, involving a number of other impressions in it. If a fragment of a rock wrenched from its place rolls slowly at first, gathers strength and fury as it proceeds, tears up everything in its way, and thunders to the plain below, there is something noble and imposing in the sight, for it is an image of our own headlong passions, and the increasing vehemence of our desires. But we hate to see a feather launched into the air and driven back on the hand that throws it, shifting its course with every puff of wind, and carried no farther by the strongest than by the slightest impulse. It is provoking (is it not?) to see the strength of the blow always defeated by the very insignificance and want of resistance in the object, and the impulse received never answering to the impulse given. It is the very same fluttering, fidgetting, tantalizing, inconsequential, ridiculous process that annoys us in the French character. There seems no *natural* correspondence between objects and feelings, between things and words. By yielding to every impulse at once, nothing produces a powerful or permanent impression; nothing produces an aggregate impression, for every part tells separately. Every idea turns off to something else, or back upon itself; there is no progress

made, no blind impulse, no accumulation of imagination with circumstances, no absorption of all other feelings in one overwhelming one, that is, no keeping, no *momentum*, no integrity, no totality, no inflexible sincerity of purpose; and it is this resolution of the sentiments into their detached points and first impressions, so that they do not take an entire and involuntary hold of them, but either they can throw them off from their lightness, or escape from them by reason of their minuteness, that we English complain of as French nature or a want of nature, for by nature is only meant that the mind identifies itself with something so as to be no longer master of itself, and the French mind never identifies itself with anything, but always has its own consciousness, its own affectation, its own gratification, its own slippery inconstancy or impertinent prolixity interposed between the object and the impression. It is this theatrical or artificial nature with which we cannot and will not sympathize, because it circumscribes the truth of things and the capacities of the human mind within the petty round of vanity, indifference, and physical sensations, stunts the growth of imagination, effaces the broad light of nature, and requires us to look at all things through the prism of their petulance and self-conceit. The French in a word leave *sincerity* out of their nature (not moral but imaginative sincerity), cut down the varieties of feeling to their own narrow and superficial standard, and having clipped and adulterated the current coin of expression, would pass it off as sterling gold. We cannot make an exchange with them. They are affected by things in a different manner from us, not in a different degree; and a mutual understanding is hopeless. We have no dislike to foreigners as such: on the contrary, a rage for foreign artists and works of art is one of our foibles. But if we give up our national pride, it must be to our taste and understandings. Nay, we adopt the manners and the fashions of the French, their dancing and their cooking,—not their music, not their painting, not their poetry, not their metaphysics, not their style of acting. If we are sensible of our own stupidity, we cannot admire *their* vivacity; if we are sick of our own awkwardness, we like it better than their grace; we cannot part with our grossness for their refinement; if we would be glad to have our lumpish clay animated, it must be with true Promo-

thean heat, not with painted phosphorus: they are not the Frankensteins that must perform this feat. Who among us in reading Schiller's Robbers for the first time ever asked if it was German or not? Who in reading Klopstock's Messiah did not object that it was German, not because it was German, but because it was heavy; that is, because the imagination and the heart do not act like a machine, so as to be wound up or let down by the pulleys of the will? Do not the French complain (and complain justly), that a picture is English, when it is coarse and unfinished, and leaves out the details which are one part of nature? Do not the English remonstrate against this defect too, and endeavor to cure it? But it may be said we relish Schiller, because he is barbarous, violent, and like Shakspeare. We have the Cartoons of Raphael then, and Elgin marbles; and we profess to admire and understand these too, and I think without any affectation. The reason is that there is no affectation in them. We like those noble outlines of the human face at Hampton Court; the sustained dignity of the expression; the broad, ample folds of the drapery; the bold, massive limbs; there is breath and motion in them, and we would willingly be so transformed and spiritualized: but we do not want to have our heavy, stupid faces frittered away into a number of glittering points or transfixed into a smooth petrifaction on French canvas. Our faces, if wanting in expression, have a settled purpose in them; are as solid as they are stupid; and we are at least flesh and blood. We also like the sway of the limbs and negligent grandeur of the Elgin marbles; in spite of their huge weight and manly strength, they have the buoyancy of a wave of the sea, with all the ease and softness of flesh: they fall into attitudes of themselves: but if they were put into attitudes by the genius of Opera-dancing, we should feel no disposition to imitate or envy them, any more than we do the Zephyr and Flora graces of French statuary. We prefer a single head of Chantry's to a quarry of French sculpture. The English are a modest people, except in comparing themselves with their next neighbors, and nothing provokes their pride in this case, so much as the self-sufficiency of the latter. When Madame Pasta walks in upon the stage, and looks about her with the same unconsciousness or timid wonder as the young stag in the forest:

when she moves her limbs as carelessly as a tree its branches; when she unfolds one of her divine expressions of countenance, which reflect the inmost feelings of the soul, as the calm, deep lake reflects the face of heaven; do we not sufficiently admire her, do we not wish her ours, and feel, with the same cast of thought and character, a want of glow, of grace, and ease in the expression of what we feel? We bow, like Guiderius and Arviragus in the cave when they saw Imogen, as to a thing superior. On the other hand, when Mademoiselle Mars comes on the stage, something in the manner of a fantoccini figure slid along on a wooden frame, and making directly for the point at which her official operations commence—when her face is puckered into a hundred little expressions like the wrinkles on the skin of a bowl of cream, set in a window to cool, her eyes peering out with an ironical meaning, her nose pointing it, and her lips confirming it with a dry pressure—we admire indeed, we are delighted, we may envy, but we do not sympathize or very well know what to make of it. We are not electrified, as in the former instance, but *animal-magnetised.** We can manage pretty well with any one feeling or expression (like a clown that must be taught his letters one at a time) if it keeps on in the same even course, that expands and deepens by degrees, but we are distracted and puzzled, or at best only amused with that sort of expression which is hardly itself for two moments together, that shifts from point to point, that seems to have no place to rest on, no impulse to urge it forward, and might as well be twenty other things at the same time—where tears come so easily they can hardly be real, where smiles are so playful they appear put on, where you cannot tell what you are to believe, for the parties themselves do not know whether they are in jest or earnest, where the whole tone is ironical, conventional, and where the difference between nature and art is nearly

* Even her *j'existe* in Valeria (when she first acquires the use of sight) is pointed like an epigram, and *put in italics*, like a technical or metaphysical distinction, instead of being a pure effusion of joy. Accordingly a French pit-critic took up the phrase, insisting that *to exist* was common to all things, and asked what the expression was in the original German. This treatment of passion is *topical* and extraneous, and seldom strikes at the seat of the disorder, the heart.

imperceptible. This is what we mean by French nature, *viz.*, that the feelings and ideas are so slight and discontinuous that they can be changed for others like a dress or vizor; or else, to make up for want of truth and breadth, are caricatured into a mask. This is the defect of their tragedy, and the defect and excellence of their comedy; the one is a pompous abortion, the other a *fac-simile* of life, almost too close to be agreeable. A French comic actor might be supposed to have left his shop for half an hour to show himself upon a stage—there is no difference, worth speaking of, between the man and the actor—whether on the stage or at home, he is equally full of gesticulation, equally voluble, and without meaning—as their tragic actors are solemn puppets, moved by rules, pulled by wires, and with their mouths stuffed with rant and bombast. This is the harm that can be said of them: they themselves are doubtless best acquainted with the good, and are not too diffident to tell it. Though other people abuse them, they can still praise themselves! I once knew a French lady who said all manner of good things and forgot them the next moment; who maintained an argument with great wit and eloquence, and presently after changed sides, without knowing that she had done so; who invented a story and believed it on the spot; who wept herself and made you weep with the force of her descriptions, and suddenly drying her eyes, laughed at you for looking grave. Is not this like acting? Yet it was not affected in her, but natural, involuntary, incorrigible. The hurry and excitement of her natural spirits was like a species of intoxication, or she resembled a child in thoughtlessness and incoherence. She was a Frenchwoman. It was nature, but nature that had nothing to do with truth or consistency.

In one of the Paris Journals lately, there was a criticism on two pictures by Girodet of Bonchamps and Cathelineau, Vendean chiefs. The paper is well written, and points out the defects of the portraits very fairly and judiciously. These persons are there called "Illustrious Vendeans." The dead dogs of 1812 are the illustrious Vendeans of 1824. Monsieur Chateaubriand will have it so, and the French are too polite a nation to contradict him. They split on this rock of complaisance, surrendering every principle to the fear of giving offence, as we do on the opposite

one of party-spirit and rancorous hostility, sacrificing the best of causes, and our best friends to the desire of giving offence, to the indulgence of our spleen, and of an ill-tongue. We apply a degrading appellation, or bring an opprobrious charge against an individual; and such is our tenaciousness of the painful and disagreeable, so fond are we of brooding over grievances, so incapable are our imaginations of raising themselves above the lowest scurrility or the dirtiest abuse, that should the person attacked come out an angel from the contest, the prejudice against him remains nearly the same as if the charge had been fully proved. An unpleasant association has been created, and this is too delightful an exercise of the understanding with the English public easily to be parted with. John Bull would as soon give up an estate as a bug-bear. Having been once gulled, they are not soon *ungulled*. They are too knowing for that. Nay, they resent the attempt to undeceive them as an injury. The French apply a brilliant epithet to the most vulnerable characters; and thus gloss over a life of treachery or infamy. With them the immediate or last impression is everything; with us, the first, if it is sufficiently strong and gloomy, never wears out! The French critic observes that M. Girodet has given General Bonchamps, though in a situation of great difficulty and danger, a calm and even smiling air, and that the portrait of Cathelineau, instead of a hero, looks only like an angry peasant. In fact, the lips in the first portrait are made of marmalade, the complexion is cosmetic, and the smile ineffably engaging; while the eye of the peasant Cathelineau darts a beam of light, such as no eye, however illustrious, was ever illumined with. But so it is, the Senses, like a favorite lap-dog, are pampered and indulged at any expense: the Imagination, like a gaunt hound, is starved and driven away. Danger and death, and ferocious courage and stern fortitude, however the subject may exact them, are uncourtly topics and kept out of sight: but smiling lips and glistening eyes are pleasing objects, and there you find them. *The style of portrait requires it.* It is of this varnish and glitter of sentiment that we complain (perhaps it is no business of ours) as what must for ever intercept the true feeling and genuine rendering of nature in French art, as what makes it spurious and counterfeit, and strips

it of simplicity, force and grandeur. Whatever pleases, whatever strikes, holds out a temptation to the French artist too strong to be resisted, and there is too great a sympathy in the public mind with this view of the subject, to quarrel with or severely criticise what is so congenial with its own feelings. A premature and superficial sensibility is the grave of French genius and of French taste. Beyond the momentary impulse of a lively organization, all the rest is mechanical and pedantic ; they give you rules and theories for truth and nature, the Unities for poetry, and the dead body for the living soul of art. They color a Greek statue ill and call it a picture : they paraphrase a Greek tragedy, and overload it with long-winded speeches, and they think they have a national drama of their own. Any other people would be ashamed of such preposterous pretensions. In invention, they do not get beyond models ; in imitation, beyond details. Their microscopic vision hinders them from seeing nature. I observed two young students the other day near the top of Montmartre, making oil sketches of a ruinous hovel in one corner of the road. Paris lay below, glittering grey and gold (like a spider's web) in the setting sun, which shot its slant rays upon their shining canvas, and they were busy in giving the finishing touches. The little outhouse was in itself picturesque enough : it was covered with moss, which hung down in a sort of drooping form as the rain had streamed down it, and the walls were loose and crumbling in pieces. Our artists had repaired everything : not a stone was out of its place : no traces were left of the winter's flaw in the pendent moss. One would think the bricklayer and gardener had been regularly set to work to do away everything like sentiment or keeping in the object before them. Oh, Paris ! it was indeed on this thy weak side (thy inability to connect any two ideas into one) that thy barbarous and ruthless foes entered in !—

The French have a great dislike to anything obscure. They cannot bear to suppose for a moment there should be anything they do not understand : they are shockingly afraid of being *mystified*. Hence they have no idea either of mental or aerial perspective. Everything must be distinctly made out and in the foreground ; for if it is not so clear that they can take it up bit by bit, it is wholly lost upon them, and they turn away as from

an unmeaning blank. This is the cause of the stiff, unnatural look of their portraits. No allowance is made for the veil that shade as well as an oblique position casts over the different parts of the face; every feature, and every part of every feature is given with the same flat effect, and it is owing to this perverse fidelity of detail, that that which is literally true, is naturally false. The side of a face seen in perspective does not present so many markings as the one that meets your eye full; but if it is put into the *vice* of French portrait, wrenched round by incorrigible affectation and conceit (that insist upon knowing all that is there, and set it down formally, though it is not to be seen), what can be the result, but that the portrait will look like a head stuck in a vice, will be flat, hard, and finished, will have the appearance of reality and at the same time look like paint; in short, will be a French portrait? That is, the artist, from a pettiness of view and want of more enlarged and liberal notions of art, comes forward not to represent nature, but like an impertinent commentator to explain what she has left in doubt, to insist on that which she passes over or touches only slightly, to throw a critical light on what she casts into shade, and to pick out the details of what she blends into masses. I wonder they allow the existence of the term *clair-obscur* at all, but it is a word; and a word is a thing they can repeat and remember. A French gentleman formerly asked me what I thought of a landscape in their Exhibition. I said that I thought it too clear. He made answer that he should never have conceived that to be possible. I replied, that what I meant was, that the parts of the several objects were made out with too nearly equal distinctness all over the picture; that the leaves of the trees in the shadow were as distinct as those in light, the branches of the trees at a distance as plain as of those near. The perspective arose only from the diminution of objects, and there was no interposition of air. I said, one could not see the leaves of a tree a mile off, but this, I added, appertained to a question in metaphysics. He shook his head, thinking that a young Englishman could know as little of abstruse philosophy as of fine art, and no more was said. I owe to this gentleman (whose name was Merimee, and who I understand is still living), a grateful sense of many friendly attentions and many useful sug-

gestions, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations.

Some one was observing of Madame Pasta's acting, that its chief merit consisted in its being natural. To which it was replied, "Not so, for that there was an ugly and a handsome nature." There is an old proverb, that "Home is home, be it never so homely:" and so it may be said of nature; that whether ugly or handsome, it is nature still. Besides beauty there is truth, which is always one principal thing. It doubles the effect of beauty, which is mere affectation without it, and even reconciles us to deformity. Nature, the truth of nature in imitation, denotes a given object, a "foregone conclusion" in reality, to which the artist is to conform in his copy. In nature real objects exist, real causes act, which are only supposed to act in art; and it is in the subordination of the uncertain and superficial combinations of fancy to the more stable and powerful law of reality that the perfection of art consists. A painter may arrange fine colors on his palette; but if he merely does this, he does nothing. It is accidental or arbitrary. The difficulty and the charm of the combination begins with the truth of imitation, that is, with the resemblance to a given object in nature, or in other words, with the strength, coherence, and justness of our impressions, which must be verified by a reference to a known and determinate class of objects as the test. Art is so far the development or the communication of knowledge, but there can be no knowledge unless it be of some given or standard object which exists independently of the representation and bends the will to an obedience to it. The strokes of the pencil are what the artist pleases, are mere idleness and caprice without meaning, unless they point to nature. Then they are right or wrong, true or false, as they follow in her steps and copy her style. Art must anchor in nature, or it is the sport of every breath of folly. Natural objects convey given or intelligible ideas which art embodies and represents, or it represents nothing, is a mere chimera or bubble; and, farther, natural objects or events cause certain feelings, in expressing which art manifests its power, and genius its prerogative. The capacity of expressing these movements of passion is in proportion to the power with which they are felt; and this is the same as sympathy with the human mind

placed in actual situations, and influenced by the real causes that are supposed to act. Genius is the power which equalizes or identifies the imagination with the reality or with nature. Certain events happening to us naturally produce joy, others sorrow, and these feelings, if excessive, lead to other consequences, such as stupor or ecstasy, and express themselves by certain signs in the countenance or voice or gestures; and we admire and applaud an actress accordingly, who gives these tones and gestures as they would follow in the order of things, because we then know that her mind has been affected in like manner, that she enters deeply into the resources of nature, and understands the riches of the human heart. For nothing else can impel and stir her up to the imitation of the truth. The way in which real causes act upon the feelings is not arbitrary, is not fanciful; it is as true as it is powerful and unforeseen; the effects can only be similar when the exciting causes have a correspondence with each other, and there is nothing like feeling *but* feeling. The sense of joy can alone produce the smile of joy; and in proportion to the sweetness, the unconsciousness, and the expansion of the last, we may be sure is the fulness and sincerity of the heart from which it proceeds. The elements of joy at least are there, in their integrity and perfection. The death or absence of a beloved object is nothing as a word, as a mere passing thought, till it comes to be dwelt upon, and we begin to feel the revulsion, the long dreary separation, the stunning sense of the blow to our happiness, as we should in reality. The power of giving this sad and bewildering effect of sorrow on the stage is derived from the force of sympathy with what we should feel in reality. That is, a great histrionic genius is one that approximates the effects of words, or of supposed situations on the mind, most nearly to the deep and vivid effect of real and inevitable ones. Joy produces tears: the violence of passion turns to childish weakness; but this could not be foreseen by study, nor taught by rules, nor mimicked by observation. Natural acting is therefore fine, because it implies and calls forth the most varied and strongest feelings that the supposed characters and circumstances can possibly give birth to: it reaches the height of the subject. The conceiving or entering into a part in this sense is everything: the acting follows easily and of course.

But art without nature is a nickname, a word without meaning, a conclusion without any premises to go upon. The beauty of Madame Pasta's acting in Nina proceeds upon this principle. It is not what she does at any particular juncture, but she seems to be the character, and to be incapable of divesting herself of it. This is true acting: anything else is playing tricks, may be clever and ingenious, is French Opera-dancing, recitation, heroics or hysterics—but it is not true nature or true art.

ESSAY XIX.

Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakspeare

The argument at the end of the last Essay may possibly serve to throw some light on the often agitated and trite question, Whether we receive more pleasure from an Opera or a Tragedy, from the words or the pantomime of a fine dramatic representation? A musician I can conceive to declare, sincerely and conscientiously, in favor of the Opera over the theatre, for he has made it his chief or exclusive study. But I have heard some literary persons do the same; and in them it appears to me to be more the affectation of candor, than candor itself. "The still small voice is wanting" in this preference; for however lulling or overpowering the effect of music may be at the time, we return to nature at last; it is there we find solidity and repose, and it is from this that the understanding ought to give its casting vote. Indeed there is a sense of reluctance and a sort of critical remorse in the opposite course as in giving up an old prejudice or a friend to whom we are under considerable obligations; but this very feeling of the conquest or sacrifice of a prejudice is a tacit proof that we are wrong; for it arises only out of the strong interest excited in the course of time, and involved in the nature and principle of the drama.

Words are the signs which point out and define the objects of the highest import to the human mind; and speech is the habitual, and as it were most *intimate* mode of expressing those signs, the one with which our practical and serious associations are most in unison. To give a deliberate verdict on the other side of the question seems, therefore, effeminate and unjust. A rose is delightful to the smell, a pine-apple to the taste. The nose and the palate, if their opinion were asked, might very fairly give it in favor of these against any rival sentiment; but the head and the heart cannot be expected to become accomplices against them

selves. We cannot pay a worse compliment to any pleasure or pursuit than to surrender the pretensions of some other to it. Everything stands best on its own foundation. A sound expresses, for the most part, nothing but itself; a word expresses a million of sounds. The thought or impression of the moment is one thing, and it may be more or less delightful; but beyond this, it may relate to the fate or events of a whole life, and it is this moral and intellectual perspective that words convey in its full signification and extent, and that gives a proportionable superiority in weight, in compass, and dignity to the denunciations of the tragic Muse. The language of the understanding is necessary to a rational being. Man is dumb and prone to the earth without it. It is that which opens the vista of our past or future years. Otherwise a cloud is upon it, like the mist of the morning, like a veil of roses, an exhalation of sweet sounds, or rich distilled perfumes; no matter what—it is the nerve or organ that is chiefly touched, the sense that is wrapped in ecstasy or waked to madness; the man remains unmoved, torpid, and listless, blind to causes and consequences, which he can never remain satisfied without knowing, but seems shut up in a cell of ignorance, baffled and confounded. Sounds without meaning are like a glare of light without objects; or, an Opera is to a Tragedy what a transparency is to a picture. We are delighted because we are dazzled. But words are a key to the affections. They not only excite feelings, but they point to the *why* and *wherefore*. Causes march before them, and consequences follow after them. They are links in the chain of the universe, and the grappling-irons that bind us to it. They open the gates of Paradise, and reveal the abyss of human wo.

> "Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
> Die in a word; such is the breath of kings."

But in this respect all men who have the use of speech are kings. It is words that constitute all but the present moment, but the present object. They may not and they do not give the whole of any train of impressions which they suggest; but they alone answer in any degree to the truth of things, unfold the dark labyrinth of fate, or unravel the web of the human heart; for they

alone describe things in the order and relation in which they happen in human life. Men do not dance or sing through life; or an Opera or a ballet would "come home to the bosoms and business of men," in the same manner that a Tragedy or Comedy does. As it is, they do not piece on to our ordinary existence, nor go to enrich our habitual reflections. We wake from them as from a drunken dream, or a last night's debauch; and think of them no more, till the actual impression is repeated. On the other hand, pantomime action (as an exclusive and new species of the drama) is like tragedy obtruncated and thrown on the ground, gasping for utterance and struggling for breath. It is a display of the powers of art, I should think more wonderful than satisfactory. There is a stifling sensation about it. It does not throw off "the perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart," but must rather aggravate and tighten the pressure.

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

This is perhaps the cause of our backwardness to admit a comparison between Mrs. Siddons and Palarini, between Shakspeare and Vigano. Poetry and words speak a language proper to humanity; every other is comparatively foreign to it. The distinction here laid down is important, and should be kept sacred. Even in speaking a foreign language, words lose half their meaning, and are no longer an echo to the sense; virtue becomes a cant-term, vice sounds like an agreeable novelty, and ceases to shock. How much more must this effect happen, if we lay aside speech (our distinguishing faculty) altogether, or try to "gabble most brutishly," measure good and evil by the steps of a dance, and breathe our souls away in dying swan-like symphonies! But it may be asked, how does all this affect my favorite art of painting? I leave somebody else to answer that question. It will be a good exercise for their ingenuity, if not for their ingenuousness.

I proceed to the more immediate object of this Essay, which was to distinguish between the talents of Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakspeare. The subject occurred to me from some conversation with a French lady, who entertains a project of introducing Shakspeare in France. As I demurred to the probability of this

alteration in the national taste, she endeavored to overcome my despondency by several lively arguments, and among other things, urged the instantaneous and universal success of the Scotch Novels among all ranks and conditions of the French people. As Shakspeare had been performing quarantine among them for a century and a half to no purpose, I thought this circumstance rather proved the difference in the genius of the two writers than a change in the taste of the nation. Madame B. stoutly maintained the contrary opinion: and when an Englishman argues with a Frenchwoman he has very considerable odds against him. The only advantage you have in this case is that you can plead inability to express yourself properly, and may be supposed to have a meaning where you have none. An eager manner will supply the place of distinct ideas, and you have only not to surrender in form, to appear to come off with flying colors. The not being able to make others understand me, however, prevents me from understanding myself, and I was by no means satisfied with the reasons I alleged in the present instance. I tried to mend them the next day, and the following is the result. It was supposed at one time that the genius of the Author of Waverley was confined to Scotland; that his Novels and Tales were a bundle of national prejudices and local traditions, and that his superiority would desert him, the instant he attempted to cross the Border. He made the attempt, however, and contrary to these unfavorable prognostics, succeeded. Ivanhoe, if not equal to the very best of the Scotch Novels, is very nearly so; and the scenery and manners are truly English. In Quentin Durward, again, he made a descent upon France, and gained new laurels, instead of losing his former ones. This seemed to bespeak a versatility of talent and a plastic power, which in the first instance had been called in question. A Scotch mist had been suspected to hang its mystery over the page; his imagination was borne up on Highland superstitions and obsolete traditions, "sailing with supreme dominion" through the murky regions of ignorance and barbarism; and if ever at a loss, his invention was eked out and *got a cast* by means of ancient documents and the records of criminal jurisprudence or fanatic rage. The Black Dwarf was a paraphrase of the current anecdotes of David Ritchie, without any

additional point or interest, and the story of Effie Deans had slept for a century in the law reports and depositions relative to the Heart of Mid-Lothian. To be sure, nothing could be finer or truer to nature; for the human heart, whenever or however it is wakened, has a stirring power in it, and as to the truth of nature, nothing can be more like nature than facts, if you know where to find them. But as to sheer invention, there appeared to be about as much as there is in the getting up the melo-dramatic representation of the Maid and the Magpie from the *Causes Célèbres*. The invention is much greater and the effect is not less in Mrs. Inchbald's NATURE AND ART, where there is nothing that can have been given *in evidence* but the Trial-Scene near the end, and even that is not a legal anecdote, but a pure dramatic fiction. Before I proceed, I may as well dwell on this point a little. The heroine of the story, the once innocent and beautiful Hannah, is brought by a series of misfortunes and crimes (the effect of a misplaced attachment) to be tried for her life at the Old Bailey, and as her Judge, her former lover and seducer, is about to pronounce sentence upon her, she calls out in an agony—"Oh! not from YOU!" and as the Hon. Mr. Norwynne proceeds to finish his solemn address, falls in a swoon, and is taken senseless from the bar. I know nothing in the world so affecting as this. Now if Mrs. Inchbald had merely found this story in the Newgate-Calendar, and transplanted it into a novel, I conceive that her merit in point of genius (not to say feeling) would be less than if having all the other circumstances given, and the apparatus ready, and this exclamation alone left blank, she had filled it up from her own heart that is, from an intense conception of the situation of the parties, so that from the harrowing recollections passing through the mind of the poor girl so circumstanced, this uncontrollable gush of feeling would burst from her lips. Just such I apprehend, generally speaking, is the amount of the difference between the genius of Shakspeare and that of Sir Walter Scott. It is the difference between *originality* and the want of it, between writing and transcribing. Almost all the finest scenes and touches, the great master-strokes in Shakspeare, are such as must have belonged to the class of invention, where the secret lay between him and his own heart, and the power exerted is in adding to the given mate-

rials and working something out of them: in the Author of Waverley, not all, but the principal and characteristic beauties are such as may and do belong to the class of compilation, that is, consist in bringing the materials together and leaving them to produce their own effect. Sir Walter Scott is much such a writer as the Duke of Wellington is a General (I am profaning a number of great names in this article by unequal comparisons). The one gets a hundred thousand men together, and wisely leaves it to them to fight out the battle, for if he meddled with it, he might spoil sport: the other gets an innumerable quantity of facts together, and lets them tell their own story, as best they may. The facts are stubborn in the last instance as the men are in the first, and in neither case is *the broth spoiled by the cook*. This abstinence from interfering with their resources, lest they should defeat their own success, shows great modesty and self-knowledge in the compiler of romances and the leader of armies, but little boldness or inventiveness of genius. We begin to measure Shakspeare's height from the superstructure of passion and fancy he has raised out of his subject and story, on which too rests the triumphal arch of his fame: if we were to take away the subject and story, the portrait and history from the Scotch Novels, no great deal would be left worth talking about.

No one admires or delights in the Scotch Novels more than I do; but at the same time when I hear it asserted that his mind is of the same class with Shakspeare's, or that he imitates nature in the same way, I confess I cannot assent to it. No two things appear to me more different. Sir Walter is an imitator of nature and nothing more; but I think Shakspeare is infinitely more than this. The creative principle is everywhere restless and redundant in Shakspeare, both as it relates to the invention of feeling and imagery; in the Author of Waverley it lies for the most part dormant, sluggish and unused. Sir Walter's mind is full of information, but the "*o'er-informing power*" is not there. Shakspeare's spirit, like fire, shines through him: Sir Walter's like a stream, reflects surrounding objects. It is true, he has shifted the scene from Scotland into England and France, and the manners and characters are strikingly English and French; but this does not prove that they are not local, and that they are not bor

rowed, as well as the scenery and costume, from comparatively obvious and mechanical sources. Nobody from reading Shakspeare would know (except from the *Dramatis Personæ*) that Lear was an English king. He is merely a king and a father. The ground is common: but what a well of tears has he dug out of it! The tradition is nothing, or a foolish one. There are no data in history to go upon; no advantage is taken of costume, no acquaintance with geography or architecture or dialect is necessary: but there is an old tradition, human nature—an old temple, the human mind—and Shakspeare walks into it and looks about him with a lordly eye, and seizes on the sacred spoils as his own. The story is a thousand or two years old, and yet the tragedy has no smack of antiquarianism in it. I should like very well to see Sir Walter giving us a tragedy of this kind, a huge "globose" of sorrow, swinging round in mid-air, independent of time, place, and circumstance, sustained by its own weight and motion, and not propped up by the levers of custom, or patched up with quaint, old-fashioned dresses, or set off by grotesque backgrounds or rusty armor, but in which the mere paraphernalia and accessories were left out of the question, and nothing but the soul of passion and the pith of imagination was to be found. "A Dukedom to a beggarly *denier*," he would make nothing of it. Does this prove he has done nothing, or that he has not done the greatest things? No, but that he is not like Shakspeare. For instance, when Lear says, "The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me!" there is no old Chronicle of the line of Brute, no *black-letter* broad-side, no tattered ballad, no vague rumor, in which this exclamation is registered; there is nothing romantic, quaint, mysterious in the objects introduced: the illustration is borrowed from the commonest and most casual images in nature, and yet it is this very circumstance that lends its extreme force to the expression of his grief by showing that even the lowest things in creation and the last you would think of had in his imagination turned against him. All nature was, as he supposed, in a conspiracy against him, and the most trivial and insignificant creatures concerned in it were the most striking proofs of its malignity and extent. It is the depth of passion, however, or of the poet's sympathy with

it, that distinguishes this character of torturing familiarity in them, invests them with corresponding importance, and suggests them by the force of contrast. It is not that certain images are surcharged with a prescriptive influence over the imagination from known and existing prejudices, so that to approach or even mention them is sure to excite a pleasing awe and horror in the mind (the effect in this case is mostly mechanical)—the whole sublimity of the passage is from the weight of passion thrown into it, and this is the poet's own doing. This is not trick, but genius. Meg Merrilies on her death-bed says, "Lay my head to the East!" Nothing can be finer or more thrilling than this in its way; but the author has little to do with it. It is an Oriental superstition; it is a proverbial expression; it is part of the gibberish (sublime though it be) of her gipsey clan!—"Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this pass." This is not a cant-phrase, nor the fragment of an old legend, nor a mysterious spell, nor the butt-end of a wizard's denunciation. It is the mere natural ebullition of passion, urged nearly to madness, and that will admit no other cause of dire misfortune but its own, which swallows up all other griefs. The force of despair hurries the imagination over the boundary of fact and common sense, and renders the transition sublime; but there is no precedent or authority for it, except in the general nature of the human mind. I think, but am not sure that Sir Walter Scott has imitated this turn of reflection, by making Madge Wildfire ascribe Jenny Deans's uneasiness to the loss of her baby, which had unsettled her own brain. Again, Lear calls on the Heavens to take his part, for "they are old like him." Here there is nothing to prop up the image but the strength of passion, confounding the infirmity of age with the stability of the firmament, and equalling the complainant, through the sense of suffering and wrong, with the Majesty of the Highest. This finding out a parallel between the most unlike objects, because the individual would wish to find one to support the sense of his own misery and helplessness, is truly Shakspearian; it is an instinctive law of our nature, and the genuine inspiration of the Muse. Racine (but let me not anticipate) would make him pour out three hundred verses of lamentation for his loss of kingdom, his feebleness, and his old

age, coming to the same conclusion at the end of every third couplet, instead of making him grasp at once at the Heavens for support. The witches in Macbeth are traditional, preternatural personages; and there Sir Walter would have left them after making what use of them he pleased as a sort of Gothic machinery. Shakspeare makes something more of them, and adds to the mystery by explaining it.

> "The earth hath bubbles as the water hath,
> And these are of them."

We have their physiognomy too—

> ——— "and enjoin'd silence,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lip."

And the mode of their disappearance is thus described—

> "And then they melted into thin air."

What an idea is here conveyed of silence and vacancy! The geese of Micklestane Muir (the country-woman and her flock of geese turned into stone) in the Black Dwarf, are a fine and petrifying metamorphosis; but it is the tradition of the country and no more. Sir Walter has told us nothing farther of it than the first clown whom we might ask concerning it. I do not blame him for that, though I cannot give him credit for what he has not done. The poetry of the novel is a *fixture* of the spot. Meg Merrilies I also allow, with all possible good-will, to be a most romantic and astounding personage; yet she is a little melodramatic. Her exits and entrances are pantomimic, and her long red cloak, her elf-locks, the rock on which she stands, and th white cloud behind her are, or might be made, the property of a theatre. Shakspeare's witches are nearly exploded on the stage. Their broomsticks are left; their metaphysics are gone, buried five editions deep in Captain Medwin's Conversations! The passion in Othello is made out of nothing but itself; there is no external machinery to help it on; its highest intermediate agent is an old-fashioned pocket-handkerchief. Yet "there's magic in

the web" of thoughts and feelings, done after the commonest pattern of human life. The power displayed in it is that of intense passion and powerful intellect, wielding every-day events, and imparting its force to them, not swayed or carried along by them as in a go-cart. The splendor is that of genius darting out its forked flame on whatever comes in its way, and kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection, whether it be flax or iron. The coloring, the form, the motion, the combination of objects depend on the predisposition of the mind, moulding nature to its own purposes; in Sir Walter the mind is as wax to circumstances, and owns no other impress. Shakspeare is a half-worker with nature. Sir Walter is like a man who has got a romantic spinning-jenny, which he has only to set a going, and it does his work for him much better and faster than he can do it for himself. He lays an embargo on "all appliances and means to boot," on history, tradition, local scenery, costume and manners, and makes his characters chiefly up of these. Shakspeare seizes only on the ruling passion, and miraculously evolves all the rest from it. The eagerness of desire suggests every possible event that can irritate or thwart it, foresees all obstacles, catches at every trifle, clothes itself with imagination, and tantalises itself with hope; "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt," starts at a phantom, and makes the universe tributary to it, and the plaything of its fancy. There is none of this over-weening importunity of the imagination in the Author of Waverley; he does his work well, but in another-guess manner. His imagination is a matter-of-fact imagination. To return to Othello. Take the celebrated dialogue in the third act. "'Tis common." There is nothing but the writhings and contortions of the heart, probed by affliction's point, as the flesh shrinks under the surgeon's knife. All its starts and flaws are but the conflicts and misgivings of hope and fear, in the most ordinary but trying circumstances. The "Not a jot, not a jot," has nothing to do with any old legend or prophecy. It is only the last poor effort of human hope, taking refuge on the lips. When after being infected with jealousy by Iago, he retires apparently comforted and resigned, and then without anything having happened in the interim, returns stung to madness, crowned with his wrongs, and raging for

revenge, the effect is like that of poison inflaming the blood, or like fire inclosed in a furnace. The sole principle of invention is the sympathy with the natural revulsion of the human mind, and its involuntary transition from false security to uncontrollable fury. The springs of mental passion are fretted and wrought to madness, and produce this explosion in the poet's breast. So when Othello swears "By yon *marble* heaven," the epithet is suggested by the hardness of his heart from the sense of injury: the texture of the outward object is borrowed from that of the thoughts: and that noble simile, "Like the Propontic," &c., seems only an echo of the sounding tide of passion, and to roll from the same source, the heart. The dialogue between Hubert and Arthur, and that between Brutus and Cassius, are among the finest illustrations of the same principle, which indeed is everywhere predominant (perhaps to a fault) in Shakspeare. His genius is like the Nile overflowing and enriching its banks; that of Sir Walter is like a mountain-stream rendered interesting by the picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery. Shakspeare produces his most striking dramatic effects out of the workings of the finest and most intense passions; Sir Walter places his *dramatis personæ* in romantic situations, and subjects them to extraordinary occurrences, and narrates the results. The one gives us what we see and hear; the other what we *are*. Hamlet is not a person whose nativity is cast, or whose death is foretold by portents: he weaves the web of his destiny out of his own thoughts, and a very quaint and singular one it is. We have, I think, a stronger fellow-feeling with him than we have with Bertram or Waverley. All men feel and think, more or less: but we are not all foundlings, Jacobites, or astrologers. We might have been overturned with these gentlemen in a stage-coach: we seem to have been schoolfellows with Hamlet at Wittenberg.

I will not press this argument farther, lest I should make it tedious, and run into questions I have no intention to meddle with. All I mean to insist upon is, that Sir Walter's *forte* is in the richness and variety of his materials, and Shakspeare's in the working them up. Sir Walter is distinguished by the most amazing retentiveness of memory, and vividness of conception of what

would happen, be seen, and felt by everybody in given circumstances; as Shakspeare is by inventiveness of genius, by a faculty of tracing and unfolding the most hidden yet powerful springs of action, scarce recognized by ourselves, and by an endless and felicitous range of poetical illustration, added to a wide scope of reading and of knowledge. One proof of the justice of these remarks is, that whenever Sir Walter comes to a truly dramatic situation, he declines it or fails. Thus in the Black Dwarf, all that relates to the traditions respecting this mysterious personage, to the superstitious stories founded on it, is admirably done and to the life, with all the spirit and freedom of originality: but when he comes to the last scene for which all the rest is a preparation, and which is full of the highest interest and passion, nothing is done; instead of an address from Sir Edward Mauley, recounting the miseries of his whole life, and withering up his guilty rival with the recital, the Dwarf enters with a strange rustling noise, the opposite doors fly open, and the affrighted spectators rush out like the figures in a pantomime. This is not dramatic, but melodramatic. There is a palpable disappointment and falling-off, where the interest had been worked up to the highest pitch of expectation. The gratifying of this appalling curiosity and interest was all that was not done to Sir Walter's hand; and this he has failed to do. All that was known *about* the Black Dwarf, his figure, his desolate habitation, his unaccountable way of life, his wrongs, his bitter execrations against intruders on his privacy, the floating and exaggerated accounts of him, all these are given with a masterly and faithful hand, this is matter of description and narrative: but when the true imaginative and dramatic part comes, when the subject of this disastrous tale is to pour out the accumulated and agonizing effects of all this series of wretchedness and torture upon his own mind, that is, when the person is to speak from himself and to stun us with the recoil of passion upon external agents or circumstances that have caused it, we find that it is Sir Walter Scott and not Shakspeare that is his counsel-keeper, that the author is a novelist and not a poet. All that is gossipped in the neighborhood, all that is handed down in print, all of which a drawing or an etching might be procured, is

gathered together and communicated to the public: what the heart whispers to itself in secret, what the imagination tells in thunder, this alone is wanting, and this is the great thing required to make good the comparison in question. Sir Walter has not then imitated Shakspeare, but he has given us nature, such as he found and could best describe it; and he resembles him only in this, that he thinks of his characters and never of himself, and pours out his works with such unconscious ease and prodigality of resources that he thinks nothing of them, and is even greater than his own fame.

The genius of Shakspeare is dramatic, that of Scott narrative or descriptive, that of Racine is didactic. He gives, as I conceive, the *common-places* of the human heart better than any one, but nothing or very little more. He enlarges on a set of obvious sentiments and well-known topics with considerable elegance of language and copiousness of declamation, but there is scarcely one stroke of original genius, nor anything like imagination in his writings. He strings together a number of moral reflections, and instead of reciting them himself, puts them into the mouths of his *dramatis personæ*, who talk well about their own situations and the general relations of human life. Instead of laying bare the heart of the sufferer with all its bleeding wounds and palpitating fibres, he puts into his hand a common-place book, and he reads us a lecture from this. This is not the essence of the drama, whose object and privilege it is to give us the extreme and subtle workings of the human mind in individual circumstances, to make us sympathize with the sufferer, or feel as we should feel in his circumstances, not to tell the indifferent spectator what the indifferent spectator could just as well tell him. Tragedy is human nature tried in the crucible of affliction, not exhibited in the vague theorems of speculation. The poet's pen that paints all this in words of fire and images of gold is totally wanting in Racine. He gives neither external images nor the internal and secret workings of the human breast. Sir Walter Scott gives the external imagery or machinery of passion; Shakspeare the soul; and Racine the moral or argument of it. The French object to Shakspeare for his breach of the Unities, and hold up Racine

as a model of classical propriety, who makes a Greek hero address a Grecian heroine as *Madame*. Yet this is not barbarous—Why? Because it is French, and because nothing that is French can be barbarous in the eyes of this frivolous and pedantic nation, who would prefer a peruke of the age of Louis XIV. to a simple Greek head-dress!

TABLE-TALK:

OPINIONS ON BOOKS, MEN, AND THINGS

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

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TABLE TALK.

ESSAY XX.

On the Spirit of Monarchy.

"Strip it of its externals, and what is it but a *jest?*"
Charade on the word MAJESTY.

"As for politics, I think that poets are *Tories* by nature, supposing them to be by nature poets. The love of an individual person or family, that has worn a crown for many successions, is an inclination greatly adapted to the fanciful tribe. On the other hand, mathematicians, abstract reasoners, of no manner of attachment to persons, at least to the visible part of them, but prodigiously devoted to the ideas of virtue, liberty, and so forth, are generally *Whigs*. It happens, agreeably enough to this maxim, that the Whigs are friends to that wise, plodding, unpoetical people, the Dutch."—*Shenstone's Letters.*

THE Spirit of Monarchy, then, is nothing but the craving in the human mind after the Sensible and the One. It is not so much a matter of state-necessity or policy, as a natural infirmity, a disease, a false appetite in the popular feeling, which must be gratified. Man is an individual animal with narrow faculties, but infinite desires, which he is anxious to concentrate in some one object within the grasp of his imagination, and where, if he cannot be all that he wishes himself, he may at least contemplate his own pride, vanity, and passions, displayed in their most extravagant dimensions in a being no bigger and no better than himself. Each individual would (were it in his power) be a king, a God: but as he cannot, the next best thing is to see this reflex image of his self-love, the darling passion of his breast, realized, embodied out of himself in the first object that he can

lay his hands on for the purpose. The slave admires the tyrant, because the last *is*, what the first *would be*. He surveys himself all over in the glass of royalty. The swelling, bloated self-importance of the one is the very counterpart and ultimate goal of the abject servility of the other. But both hate mankind for the same reason, because a respect for humanity is a diversion to their inordinate self-love, and the idea of the general good is a check to the gross intemperance of passion. The worthlessness of the object does not diminish but irritate the propensity to admire. It serves to pamper our imagination equally, and does not provoke our envy. All we want is to aggrandize our own vain-glory at second hand; and the less of real superiority or excellence there is in the person we fix upon as our proxy in this dramatic exhibition, the more easily can we change places with him, and fancy ourselves as good as he. Nay, the descent favors the rise; and we heap our tribute of applause the higher, in proportion as it is a free gift. An idol is not the worse for being of coarse materials; a king should be a common-place man. Otherwise, he is superior in his own nature, and not dependent on our bounty or caprice. Man is a poetical animal, and delights in fiction. We like to have scope for the exercise of our mere will. We make kings of men, and gods of stocks and stones; we are not jealous of the creatures of our own hands. We only want a peg or loop to hang our idle fancies on, a puppet to dress up, a lay figure to paint from. It is "THING Ferdinand, and not KING Ferdinand," as it was wisely and wittily observed. We ask only for the stage effect; we do not go behind the scenes, or it would go hard with many of our prejudices! We see the symbols of Majesty, we enjoy the pomp, we crouch before the power, we walk in the procession, and make part of the pageant, and we say in our secret hearts, there is nothing but accident that prevents us from being at the head of it. There is something in the mock sublimity of thrones, wonderfully congenial to the human mind. Every man feels that he could sit there; every man feels that he could look big there; every man feels that he could bow there: every man feels that he could play the

monarch there. The transition is so easy, and so delightful! The imagination keeps pace with royal state,

> "And by the vision splendid
> Is on the way attended."

The Madman in Hogarth who fancies himself a king, is not a solitary instance of this species of hallucination. Almost every true and loyal subject holds such a barren sceptre in his hand; and the meanest of the rabble, as he runs by the monarch's side, has wit enough to think—"There goes my *royal* self!" From the most absolute despot to the lowest slave there is but one step (no, not one) in point of real merit. As far as truth or reason is concerned, they might change situations to-morrow—nay, they constantly do so without the smallest loss or benefit to mankind! Tyranny, in a word, is a farce got up for the entertainment of poor human nature; and it might pass very well, if it did not so often turn into a tragedy.

We once heard a celebrated and elegant historian and a hearty Whig declare, he liked a king like George III. better than such a one as Bonaparte; because, in the former case, there was nothing to overawe the imagination but birth and situation; whereas he could not so easily brook the double superiority of the other, mental as well as adventitious. So does the spirit of independence and the levelling pride of intellect join in with the servile rage of the vulgar! This is the advantage which an hereditary has over an elective monarchy: for there is no end of the dispute about precedence while merit is supposed to determine it, each man laying claim to this in his own person; so that there is no other way to set aside all controversy and heart-burnings, but by precluding moral and intellectual qualifications altogether, and referring the choice to accident, and giving the preference to a nonentity. "A good king," says Swift, "should be, in all other respects, a mere cypher."

It has been remarked, as a peculiarity in modern criticism, that the courtly and loyal make a point of crying up Mr. Young, as an actor, and equally running down Mr. Kean; and it has been conjectured in consequence that Mr. Kean was a *radical*.

Truly, he is not a radical politician ; but what is as bad, he is a radical actor. He savors too much of the reality. He is not a mock-tragedian, an automaton player—he is something besides his paraphernalia. He has "that within which passes show." There is not a particle of affinity between him and the patrons of the court-writers. Mr. Young, on the contrary, is the very thing —all assumption and strut, and measured pomp, full of self-importance, void of truth and nature, the mask of the characters he takes, a pasteboard figure, a stiff piece of wax-work. He fills the throne of tragedy, not like an upstart or usurper, but as a matter of course, decked out in his plumes of feathers, and robes of state, stuck into a posture, and repeating certain words by rote. Mr. Kean has a heart in his bosom, beating with human passion (a thing for the great "to fear, not to delight in !") he is a living man, and not an artificial one. How should those, who look to the surface, and never probe deeper, endure him ? He is the antithesis of a court-actor. It is the object there to suppress and varnish over the feelings, not to give way to them. His *overt* manner must shock them, and be thought a breach of all decorum. They are in dread of his fiery humors, of coming near his Voltaic Battery—they choose rather to be roused gently from their self-complacent apathy by the application of Metallic Tractors. They dare not trust their delicate nerves within the estuary of the passions, but would slumber out their torpid existence in a calm, a Dead Sea—the air of which extinguishes life and motion !

Would it not be hard upon a little girl, who is busy in dressing up a favorite doll, to pull it in pieces before her face in order to show her the bits of wood, the wool, and rags, it is composed of ? So it would be hard upon that great baby, the world, to take any of its idols to pieces, and show that they are nothing but painted wood. Neither of them would thank you, but consider the offer as an insult. The little girl knows as well as you do that her doll is a cheat ; but she shuts her eyes to it, for she finds her account in keeping up the deception. Her doll is her pretty little self. In its glazed eyes, its cherry cheeks, its flaxen locks, its finery and its baby house, she has a fairy vision of her own

future charms, her future triumphs, a thousand hearts led captive, and an establishment for life. Harmless illusion! that can create something out of nothing, can make that which is good for nothing in itself so fine in appearance, and clothe a shapeless piece of deal-board with the attributes of a divinity! But the great world has been doing little else but playing at *make-believe* all its lifetime. For several thousand years its chief rage was to paint larger pieces of wood and smear them with gore and call them gods, and offer victims to them—slaughtered hecatombs, the fat of goats and oxen, or human sacrifices—showing in this its love of show, of cruelty, and imposture; and wo to him who should "peep through the blanket of the dark to cry, *Hold, hold.*"—*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, was the answer in all ages. It was in vain to represent to them, "Your gods have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not, neither do they understand"—the more stupid, brutish, helpless, and contemptible they were, the more furious, bigoted, and implacable were their votaries in their behalf.* The more absurd the fiction, the louder was the noise made to hide it—the more mischievous its tendency, the more did it excite all the phrenzy of the passions. Superstition nursed, with peculiar zeal, her ricketty, deformed, and preposterous offspring. She passed by the nobler races of animals even, to pay divine honors to the odious and unclean—she took toads and serpents, cats, rats, dogs, crocodiles, goats and monkeys, and hugged them to her bosom and dandled them into deities, and set up altars to them, and drenched the earth with tears and blood in their defence; and those who did not believe in them were cursed, and were forbidden the use of bread, of fire, and water, and to worship them was piety, and their images were held sacred, and their race became gods in perpetuity and by divine right. To touch them was sacrilege: to kill them, death, even in your defence. If they stung you, you must die: if they infested the land with their

* "Of whatsoe'er descent his Godhead be,
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,
In his defence his servants are as bold
As if he had been made of beaten gold."—DRYDEN.

numbers and their pollution, there was no remedy. The nuisance was intolerable, impassive, immortal. Fear, religious horror, disgust, hatred, heightened the flame of bigotry and intolerance. There was nothing so odious or contemptible but it found a sanctuary in the more odious and contemptible perversity of human nature. The barbarous gods of antiquity reigned *in contempt of their worshippers!*

This game was carried on through all the first ages of the world, and is still kept up in many parts of it; and it is impossible to describe the wars, massacres, horrors, miseries and crimes, to which it gave color, sanctity, and sway. The idea of a God, beneficent and just, the invisible Maker of all things, was abhorrent to their gross material notions. No, they must have Gods of their own making, that they could see and handle, that they knew to be nothing in themselves but senseless images, and these they daubed over with the gaudy emblems of their own pride and passions, and these they lauded to the skies, and grew fierce, obscene, frantic before them, as the representatives of their sordid ignorance and barbaric vices. TRUTH—GOOD, were idle names to them, without a meaning. They must have a lie, a palpable, pernicious lie, to pamper their crude, unhallowed conceptions with, and to exercise the untameable fierceness of their wills. The Jews were the only people of antiquity who were withheld from running headlong into this abomination; yet so strong was the propensity in them (from inherent frailty as well as neighboring example) that it could only be curbed and kept back by the hands of Omnipotence.* At length, reason prevailed over imagination so far, that these brute idols and their altars were overturned: it was thought too much to set up stocks and stones, Golden Calves and Brazen Serpents, as *bonâ fide* Gods and Goddesses, which men were to fall down and worship at their peril—and Pope long after summed up the merits of the whole mythologic tribe in a handsome distich—

* They *would* have a king in spite of the devil. The image-worship of the Papists is a batch of the same leaven. The apishness of man's nature would not let even the Christian religion escape.

"Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust."

It was thought a bold stride to divert the course of our imaginations, the overflowings of our enthusiasm, our love of the mighty and the marvellous, from the dead to the living *subject*, and there we stick. We have got living idols, instead of dead ones; and we fancy that they are real, and put faith in them accordingly. Oh, Reason! when will thy long minority expire? It is not now the fashion to make gods of wood, and stone, and brass, but we make kings of common men, and are proud of our own handy-work. We take a child from his birth, and we agree, when he grows up to be a man, to heap the highest honors of the state upon him, and to pay the most devoted homage to his will. Is there anything in the person, "any mark, any likelihood," to warrant this sovereign awe and dread? No: he may be little better than an idiot, little short of a madman, and yet he is no less qualified for king.* If he can contrive to pass the College of Physicians, the Heralds' College dub him divine. Can we make any given individual taller, or stronger, or wiser, than other men, or different in any respect from what nature intended him to be? No; but we can make a king of him. We cannot add a cubit to the stature, or instil a virtue into the minds of monarchs—but we can put a sceptre into their hands,

* "In fact the argument drawn from the supposed incapacity of the people against a representative Government comes with the worst grace in the world from the patrons and admirers of hereditary government. Surely, if government were a thing requiring the utmost stretch of genius, wisdom, and virtue to carry it on, the office of King would never even have been dreamt of as hereditary, any more than that of poet, painter, or philosopher. It is easy here 'for the son to tread in the Sire's steady steps.' It requires nothing but the will to do it. Extraordinary talents are not once looked for. Nay, a person who would never have risen by natural abilities to the situation of churchwarden or parish beadle, succeeds by unquestionable right to the possession of a throne, and wields the energies of an empire, or decides the fate of the world with the smallest possible share of human understanding. The line of distinction which separates the regal purple from the slabbering-bib is sometimes fine indeed: as we see in the case of the two Ferdinands. Any one above the rank of an idiot is supposed capable of exercising the highest functions of royal state. Yet these are the persons who talk of the people as a swinish multitude, and taunt them with their want of refinement and philosophy."—*Yellow Dwarf*, p. 84.

a crown upon their heads, we can set them on an eminence, we can surround them with circumstance, we can aggrandize them with power, we can pamper their appetites, we can pander to their wills. We can do everything to exalt them in external rank and station—nothing to lift them one step higher in the scale of moral or intellectual excellence.

Education does not give capacity or temper; and the education of kings is not especially directed to useful knowledge or liberal sentiment. What then is the state of the case? The highest respect of the community and of every individual in it is paid and is due of right there, where perhaps not an idea can take root, or a single virtue be engrafted. Is not this to erect a standard of esteem directly opposite to that of mind and morals? The lawful monarch may be the best or the worst man of his dominions, he may be the wisest or the weakest, the wittiest or the stupidest: still he is equally entitled to our homage as king, for it is the place and power we bow to, and not the man. He may be a sublimation of all the vices and diseases of the human heart; yet we are not to say so, we dare not even think so. "Fear God, and honor the King," is equally a maxim at all times and seasons. The personal character of the king has nothing to do with the question. Thus the extrinsic is set up over the intrinsic by authority: wealth and interest lend their countenance to gilded vice and infamy on principle, and outward show and advantages become the symbols and the standard of respect in despite of useful qualities or well-directed efforts through all ranks and gradations of society. "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness left." The whole style of moral thinking, feeling, acting, is in a false tone—is hollow, spurious, meretricious. Virtue, says Montesquieu, is the principle of republics; honor, of a monarchy. But it is "honor dishonorable, sin-bred"—it is the honor of truckling a principle for a place, of exchanging our honest convictions for a ribbon or a garter. The business of life is a scramble for unmerited precedence. Is not the highest respect entailed, the highest station filled without any possible proofs or pretensions to public spirit or public principle? Shall not the next places to it

be secured by the sacrifice of them? It is the order of the day, the understood etiquette of courts and kingdoms. For the servants of the crown to presume on merit, when the crown itself is held as an heir-loom by prescription, is a kind of *lèze majesté*, an indirect attainder of the title to the succession. Are not all eyes turned to the sun of court-favor? Who would not then reflect its smile by the performance of any acts which can avail in the eye of the great, and by the surrender of any virtue, which attracts neither notice nor applause? The stream of corruption begins at the fountain-head of court-influence. The sympathy of mankind is that on which all strong feeling and opinion floats; and this sets in full in every absolute monarchy to the side of tinsel show and iron-handed power, in contempt and defiance of right and wrong. The right and the wrong are of little consequence, compared to the *in* and the *out*. The distinction between Whig and Tory is merely nominal: neither have their country one bit at heart. Pshaw! we had forgot—Our British monarchy is a mixed, and the only perfect form of government; and therefore what is here said cannot properly apply to it. But MIGHT BEFORE RIGHT is the motto blazoned on the front of unimpaired and undivided Sovereignty!—

A court is the centre of fashion; and no less so, for being the sink of luxury and vice—

——"Of outward show
Elaborate, of inward less exact."

The goods of fortune, the basis of power, the indulgences of vanity, may be accumulated without end, and the taste for them increases as it is gratified: the love of virtue, the pursuit of truth, grow stale and dull in the dissipation of a court. Virtue is thought crabbed and morose, knowledge pedantic, while every sense is pampered, and every folly tolerated. Everything tends naturally to personal aggrandizement and unrestrained self-will. It is easier for monarchs as well as other men "to tread the primrose path of dalliance," than "to scale the steep and thorny road to heaven." The vices, when they have leave from power and authority, go greater lengths than the virtues; example justifies almost every excess, and "nice customs courtesy to great kings."

What chance is there that monarchs should not yield to the temptations of gallantry then, when youth and beauty are as wax? What female heart can indeed withstand the attractions of a throne—the smile that melts all hearts, the air that awes rebellion, the frown that kings dread, the hand that scatters fairy wealth, that bestows titles, places, honor, power, the breast on which the star glitters, the head circled with a diadem, whose dress dazzles with its richness and its taste, who has nations at his command, senates at his control, "in form and motion so express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a God; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!" The power of resistance is so much the less where fashion extends impunity to the frail offender, and screens the loss of character.

"Vice is undone, if she forgets her birth,
And stoops from angels to the dregs of earth,
But 'tis the fall degrades her to a whore:
Let greatness own her, and she is mean no more.
Her birth, her beauty, crowds and courts confess,
Chaste matrons praise her, and grave bishops bless.
In golden chains the willing world she draws,
And hers the Gospel is, and hers the laws."*

* A lady of quality abroad, in allusion to the gallantries of the reigning Prince, being told, "I suppose it will be your turn next?" said, "No, I hope not: for you know it is impossible to refuse!" What a satire on the court and fashionables! If this be true, female virtue in the blaze of royalty is no more than the moth in the candle, or ice in the sun's ray. What will the great themselves say to it, in whom at this rate,

——"the same luck holds,
They all are subjects, courtiers, and cuckolds!"

Out upon it! We'll not believe it. Alas! poor virtue, what is to become of the very idea of it, if we are to be told that every man within the precincts of a palace is a *hypothetical* cuckold, or holds his wife's virtue in trust for the Prince. We entertain no doubt that many ladies of quality have resisted the importunities of a throne, and that many more would do so in private life, if they had the desired opportunity: nay, we have been assured by several that a king would no more be able to prevail with them than any other man! If, however, there is any foundation for the above insinuation, it throws no small light on the Spirit of Monarchy, which by the supposition implies in it the *virtual* surrender of the whole sex at discretion: and at the same time accounts perhaps for the indifference shown by some monarchs in availing themselves of so mechanical a privilege.

The air of a court is not assuredly that which is most favorable to the practice of self-denial and strict morality. We increase the temptations of wealth, of power, and pleasure a thousand-fold, while we can give no additional force to the antagonist principles of reason, disinterested integrity, and goodness of heart. Is it to be wondered at that courts and palaces have produced so many monsters of avarice, cruelty, and lust? The adept in voluptuousness is not likely to be a proportionable proficient in humanity. To feed on plate or be clothed in purple, is not to feel for the hungry and the naked. He who has the greatest power put into his hands, will only become more impatient of any restraint in the use of it. To have the welfare and the lives of millions placed at our disposal, is a sort of warrant, a challenge to squander them without mercy. An arbitrary monarch set over the heads of his fellows does not identify himself with them, or learn to comprehend their rights or sympathize with their interests, but looks down upon them as of a different species from himself, as insects crawling on the face of the earth, that he may trample on at his pleasure, or if he spares them, it is an act of royal grace;—he is besotted with power, blinded with prerogative, an alien to his nature, a traitor to his trust, and instead of being the organ of public feeling and public opinion, is an excrescence and an anomaly in the state, a bloated mass of morbid humors and proud flesh! A constitutional king, on the other hand, is a servant of the public, a representative of the people's wants and wishes, dispensing justice and mercy according to law. Such a monarch is the King of England! Such was his late, and such is his present Majesty George the Fourth:—

Let us take the Spirit of Monarchy in its highest state of exaltation, in the moment of its proudest triumph—a Coronation day. We now see it in our mind's eye; the preparation of weeks—the expectation of months—the seats, the privileged places, are occupied in the obscurity of night, and in silence—the day dawns slowly, big with the hope of Cæsar and of Rome—the golden censers are set in order, the tables groan with splendor and with luxury—within the inner space of rows peer-

esses are set, and revealed to the eye decked out in ostrich feathers and pearls, like beds of lilies sparkling with a thousand dew-drops—the marshals and the heralds are in motion—the full organ, majestic peals forth the Coronation Anthem—everything is ready—and all at once the majesty of kingdoms bursts upon the astonished sight—his person is swelled out with all the gorgeousness of dress, and swathed in bales of silk and golden tissues—the bow with which he greets the assembled multitude, and the representatives of foreign kings, is the climax of conscious dignity, bending gracefully on its own bosom, and instantly thrown back into the sightless air, as if asking no recognition in return—the oath of mutual fealty between him and his people is taken—the fairest flowers of female beauty precede the Sovereign, scattering roses ; the sons of princes page his heels, holding up the robes of crimson and ermine—he staggers and reels under the weight of royal pomp, and of a nation's eyes ; and thus the pageant is launched into the open day, dazzling the sun, whose beams seem beaten back by the sun of royalty—there were the warrior, the statesman, and the mitred head—there was Prince Leopold, like a panther in its dark glossy pride, and Castlereagh, clad in triumphant smiles and snowy satin, unstained with his own blood—the loud trumpet brays, the cannon roars, the spires are mad with music—the crowd press on, the metropolis heaves like a sea in restless motion, the air is thick with loyalty's quick pants in its monarch's arms—all eyes drink up the sight, all tongues reverberate the sound—

> "A present deity they shout around,
> A present deity the vaulted roofs rebound!"

What does it all amount to ? A show—a theatrical spectacle! What does it prove ? That a king is crowned—that a king is dead ! What is the moral to be drawn from it, that is likely to sink into the heart of a nation ? That greatness consists in finery, and that supreme merit is the dower of birth and fortune ? It is a form, a ceremony to which each successor to the throne is entitled in his turn as a matter of right. Does it

depend on the inheritance of virtue, on the acquisition of knowledge in the new monarch, whether he shall be thus exalted in the eyes of the people? No:—to say so is not only an offence in manners, but a violation of the laws. The king reigns in contempt of any such pragmatical distinctions. They are set aside, proscribed, treasonable, as it relates to the august person of the monarch; what is likely to become of them in the minds of the people? A coronation overlays and drowns all such considerations for a generation to come, and so far it serves its purpose well. It debauches the understandings of the people, and makes them slaves of sense and show. It laughs to scorn and tramples upon every other claim to distinction or respect. Is the chief person in the pageant a tyrant? It does not lessen, but aggrandizes him to the imagination. Is he the king of a free people? We make up in love and loyalty what we want in fear. Is he young? He borrows understanding and experience from the learning and tried wisdom of councils and parliaments. Is he old? He leans upon the youth and beauty that attend his triumph, Is he weak? Armies support him with their myriads. Is he diseased? What is health to a staff of physicians? Does he die? The truth is out, and he is then —nothing!

There is a cant among the court-sycophants of calling all those who are opposed to them "the *rabble*," "*fellows*," "*miscreants*," &c. This shows the grossness of their ideas of all true merit, and the false standard of rank and power by which they measure everything; like footmen, who suppose their masters must be gentlemen, and that the rest of the world are low people. Whatever is opposed to power, they think despicable; whatever suffers oppression, they think deserves it. They are ever ready to side with the strong, to insult and trample on the weak. This is with us a pitiful fashion of thinking. They are not of the mind of Pope, who was so full of the opposite conviction, that he has even written a bad couplet to express it:

> "Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
> The rest is all but leather and prunella."

Those lines in Cowper also must sound very puerile or old-fashioned to courtly ears :

> " The only Amaranthine flower on earth
> Is virtue ; the only lasting treasure, truth."

To this sentiment, however, we subscribe our hearts and hands. There is nothing truly liberal but that which postpones its own claims to those of propriety—or great, but that which looks out of itself to others. All power is but an unabated nuisance, a barbarous assumption, an aggravated injustice, that is not directed to the common good : all grandeur that has not something corresponding to it in personal merit and heroic acts, is a deliberate burlesque, and an insult on common sense and human nature. That which is true, the understanding ratifies : that which is good, the heart owns : all other claims are spurious, vitiated, mischievous, false—fit only for those who are sunk below contempt, or raised above opinion. We hold in scorn all *right-lined* pretensions but those of rectitude. If there is offence in this, we are ready to abide by it. If there is shame, we take it to ourselves ; and we hope and hold that the time will come, when all other idols but those which represent pure truth and real good, will be looked upon with the same feelings of pity and wonder that we now look back to the images of Thor and Woden !

Really, that men born to a throne (limited or unlimited) should employ the brief span of their existence here in doing all the mischief in their power, in levying cruel wars and undermining the liberties of the world, to prove to themselves and others that their pride and passions are of more consequence than the welfare of mankind at large, would seem a little astonishing, but that the fact is so. It is not our business to preach lectures to monarchs, but if we were at all disposed to attempt the ungracious task, we should do it in the words of an author who often addressed the ear of monarchs.

'A man may read a sermon," says Jeremy Taylor, "the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escurial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and

decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more : and where *our* kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsire's head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the height of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colors of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world, that when we die our ashes shall be equal to kings, and our accounts shall be easier, and our pains for our crimes shall be less. To my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus, the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death is summed up in these words : 'Ninus, the Assyrian, had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian sea ; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it ; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi ; nor touched his God with the sacred rod, according to the laws ; he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the Deity, nor administered justice, nor spake to the people, nor numbered them ; but he was the most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead : behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. *Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust is all my portion : the wealth with which I was blest, my enemies meeting together shall carry away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to Hell ; and when I went thither, I carried neither gold, nor horse, nor a silver chariot. I, that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust!*"—Taylor's Holy Living and Dying.

ESSAY XXI.

The Vatican.

L. The Vatican did not quite answer your expectation?

H. To say the truth, it was not such a blow as the Louvre; but then it came after it, and what is more, at the distance of twenty years. To have made the same impression, it should have been twenty times as fine; though that was scarcely possible, since all that there is fine in the Vatican, in Italy, or in world, was in the Louvre when I first saw it, except the frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo, which could not be transported, without taking the walls of the building across the Alps.

L. And what, may I ask (for I am curious to hear), did you think of these same frescoes?

H. Much the same as before I saw them. As far as I could judge, they are very like the prints. I do not think the spectator's idea of them is enhanced beyond this. The Raphaels, of which you have a distinct and admirable view, are somewhat faded—I do not mean in color, but the outline is injured—and the Sibyls and Prophets in the Sistine Chapel are painted on the ceiling at too great a height for the eye to distinguish the faces as accurately as one would wish. The features and expressions of the figures near the bottom of the "Last Judgment" are sufficiently plain; and horrible enough they are.

L. What was your opinion of the "Last Judgment" itself?

H. It is literally too big to be seen. It is like an immense field of battle, or charnel-house strewed with carcasses and naked bodies: or it is a shambles of Art. You have huge limbs apparently torn from their bodies and stuck against the wall: anatomical dissections, backs and diaphragms, tumbling "with hideous ruin and combustion down," neither intelligible groups, nor perspective, nor color: you distinguish the princi-

pal figure, that of Christ, only from its standing in the centre of the picture, on a sort of island of earth, separated from the rest of the subject by an inlet of sky. The whole is a scene of enormous, ghastly confusion, in which you can only make out quantity and number, and vast, uncouth masses of bones and muscles. It has the incoherence and distortion of a troubled dream, without the shadowness; everything is here corporeal and of solid dimensions.

L. But surely there must be something fine in the Sibyls and Prophets, from the copies we have of them; justifying the high encomiums of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and of so many others?

H. It appears to me that nothing can be finer, as to form, attitude, and outline. The whole conception is so far inimitably noble and just; and all that is felt as wanting, is a proportionable degree of expression in the countenances, though of this I am not sure, for the height (as I said before) baffles a nice scrutiny. They looked to me unfinished, vague, and general. Like some fabulous figure from the antique, the heads were brutal, the bodies divine. Or at most, the faces were only continuations of and on a par with the physical form, large and bold, and with great breadth of drawing, but no more the seat of a vivifying spirit, or with a more powerful and marked intelligence emanating from them, than from the rest of the limbs, the hands, or even drapery. The filling up of the mind is, I suspect, wanting, the *divinæ particula auræ:* there is a prodigious and mighty prominence and grandeur and simplicity in the features, but they are not surcharged with meaning, with thought or passion, like Raphael's, "the rapt soul sitting in the eyes." On the contrary, they seem only to be half-informed, and might be almost thought asleep. They are fine moulds, and contain a capacity of expression, but are not bursting, teeming with it. The outward, material shrine, or tabernacle, is unexceptionable; but there is not superadded to it a revelation of the workings of the mind within. The forms in Michael Angelo are objects to admire in themselves: those of Raphael are merely a language pointing to something beyond, and full of this ultimate import.

L. But does not the difference arise from the nature of the subjects?

H. I should think not. Surely, a Sybil in the height of her phrensy, or an inspired Prophet—"seer blest"—in the act of receiving or announcing the will of the Almighty, is not a less fit subject for the most exalted and impassioned expression than an Apostle, a Pope, a Saint, or a common man. If you say that these persons are not represented in the act of inspired communication, but in their ordinary quiescent state,—granted; but such preternatural workings, as well as the character and frame of mind proper for them, must leave their shadowings and lofty traces behind them. The face that has once held communion with the Most High, or been wrought to madness by deep thought and passion, or that inly broods over its sacred or its magic lore, must be "as a book where one may read strange matters," that cannot be opened without a correspondent awe and reverence. But here is "neither the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night;" neither the blaze of immediate inspiration nor the hallowed radiance, the mystic gloomy light that follows it, so far as I was able to perceive. I think it idle to say that Michael Angelo painted man in the abstract, and so left expression indeterminate, when he painted prophets and other given characters in particular. He has painted them on a larger scale, and cast their limbs in a gigantic mould to give a dignity and command answering to their situations and high calling, but I do not see the same high character and intensity of thought or purpose impressed upon their countenances. Thus, nothing can be nobler or more characteristic than the figure of the prophet Jeremiah. It is not abstracted, but symbolical of the history and functions of the individual. The whole figure bends and droops, under a weight of wo, like a large willow tree surcharged with showers. Yet there is no peculiar expression of grief in one part more than another: the head hangs down despondingly indeed, but so do the hands, the clothes, and every other part seems to labor under and be involved in a complication of distress. Again, the prophet Ezra is represented reading, in a striking attitude of

attention, and with the book held close to him as if to lose no part of its contents in empty space :—all this is finely imagined and designed, but then the book reflects back none of its pregnant, hieroglyphic meaning on the face, which, though large and stately, is an ordinary, unimpassioned, and even *unideal* one. Daniel, again, is meant for a face of inward thought and musing, but it might seem as if the compression of the features were produced by external force as much as by involuntary perplexity. I might extend these remarks to this artist's other works ; for instance, to the Moses, of which the form and attitude express the utmost dignity and energy of purpose, but the face wants a something of the intelligence and expansive views of the Hebrew legislator. It is cut from the same block, and by the same bold sweeping hand, as the sandals or the drapery.

L. Do you think there is any truth or value in the distinction which assigns to Raphael the dramatic, and to Michael Angelo the epic department of the art ?

H. Very little, I confess. It is so far true, that Michael Angelo painted single figures, and Raphael chiefly groups ; but Michael Angelo gave life and action to his figures, though not the same expression to the face. I think this arose from two circumstances. First, from his habits as a sculptor, in which form predominates, and in which the fixed lineaments are more attended to than the passing inflections, which are neither so easily caught nor so well given in sculpture as in painting. Secondly, it strikes me that Michael Angelo, who was a strong iron-built man, sympathized more with the organic structure, with bones and muscles, than with the more subtle and sensitive workings of that fine medullary substance called the brain. He compounded man admirably of brass or clay, but did not succeed equally in breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, of thought or feeling. He has less humanity than Raphael, and I think that he is also less divine, unless it be asserted that the body is less allied to earth than the mind. Expression is, after all, the principal thing. If Michael Angelo's forms have, as I allow, an intellectual character about them and a greatness of *gusto*, so that you would almost say "his bodies thought," his faces, on the other hand, have a

drowsy and material one. For example, in the figure of Adam coming from the hand of his Creator, the composition, which goes on the idea of a being starting into life at the touch of Omnipotence, is sublime:—the figure of Adam reclining at ease with manly freedom and independence, is worthy of the original founder of our race; and the expression of the face, implying passive resignation and the first consciousness of existence, is in thorough keeping—but I see nothing in the countenance of the Deity denoting supreme might and majesty. The Eve, too, lying extended at the foot of the Forbidden Tree, has an elasticity and buoyancy about it, that seems as if it could bound up from the earth of its own accord, like a bow that was bent. It is all life and grace. The action of the head thrown back, and the upward look, correspond to the rest. The artist was here at home. In like manner, in the allegorical figures of Night and Morn at Florence, the faces are ugly or distorted, but the contour and actions of the limbs express dignity and power in the very highest degree. The legs of the figure of Night, in particular, are twisted into the involutions of a serpent's folds; the neck is curved like the horse's, and is clothed with thunder.

L. What then is the precise difference between him and Raphael, according to your conception?

H. As far as I can explain the matter, it seems to me that Michael Angelo's forms are finer, but that Raphael's are more fraught with meaning; that the rigid outline and disposable masses in the first are more grand and imposing, but that Raphael put a greater proportion of sentiment into his, and calls into play every faculty of the mind and body of which his characters are susceptible, with greater subtilty and intensity of feeling. Dryden's lines,

> "A fiery soul that working out its way
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
> And o'er-informed the tenement of clay—"

do not exactly answer to Raphael's character, which is mild and thoughtful rather than fiery; nor is there any want either of grace or grandeur in his figures: but the passage describes the "o'er-informing" spirit that breathes through them, and the un-

equal struggle of the expression to vent itself by more than ordinary physical means. Raphael lived a much shorter time than Michael Angelo, who also lived long after him ; and there is no comparison between the number, the variety, or the finished elegance of their work.* Michael Angelo possibly lost himself in the material and instrumental part of art, in embodying a technical theory, or in acquiring the grammar of different branches of study, excelling in knowledge and in gravity of pretension ; whereas Raphael gave himself up to the diviner or lovelier impulse that breathes its soul over the face of things, being governed by a sense of reality and of general truth. There is nothing exclusive or repulsive in Raphael ; he is open to all impressions alike, and seems to identify himself with whatever he saw that arrested his attention or could interest others. Michael Angelo studied for himself, and raised objects to the standard of his conception, by a *formula* or system : Raphael invented for others, and was guided only by a sympathy with them. Michael Angelo was painter, sculptor, architect : but he might be said to make of each art a shrine, in which to build up the stately and gigantic stature of his own mind:—Raphael was only a painter, but in that one art he seemed to pour out all the treasures and various excellence of nature, grandeur, and scope of design, exquisite finishing, force, grace, delicacy, the strength of man, the softness of woman, the playfulness of infancy, thought, feeling, invention, imitation, labor, ease, and every quality that can distinguish a picture, except color. Michael Angelo, in a word, stamped his own character on his works, or recast Nature in a mould of his own, leaving out much that was excellent : Raphael received his inspiration from without, and his genius caught the lambent flame of grace, of truth, and grandeur, which are reflected in his works with a light, clear, transparent, and unfading.

L. Will you mention one or two things that particularly struck you ?

H. There is a figure of a man leading a horse in the Attila,

* The oil-pictures attributed to Michael Angelo are meagre and pitiful, such as that of the Fates at Florence. Another of Witches, at Cardinal Fesch's at Rome, is like what the late Mr. Barry would have admired and imitated—dingy, coarse, and vacant.

which I think peculiarly characteristic. It is an ordinary face and figure, in a somewhat awkward dress: but he seems as if he had literally walked into the picture at that instant; he is looking forward with a mixture of earnestness and curiosity, as if the scene were passing before him, and every part of his figure and dress is flexible and in motion, pliant to the painter's plastic touch. This figure, so unconstrained and free, animated, salient, put me in mind, compared with the usual stiffness and shackles of the art, of chain armor used by the knights of old instead of coat-of-mail. Raphael's fresco-figures seem the least of all others taken from plaster-casts; this is more than can be said of Michael Angelo's, which might be taken from, or would serve for, very noble ones. The horses in the same picture also delight me. Though dumb, they appear as if they could speak, and were privy to the import of the scene. Their inflated nostrils and speckled skins are like a kind of proud flesh; or they are spiritualized. In the Miracle of Bolsano is that group of children, round-faced, smiling, with large-orbed eyes, like infancy nestling in the arms of affection: the studied elegance of the choir of tender novices, with all their sense of the godliness of their function and the beauty of holiness; and the hard, liny, individual portraits of priests and cardinals on the right hand, which have the same life, spirit, boldness and marked character, as if you could have looked in upon the assembled conclave Neither painting nor poetry ever produced anything finer. There is the utmost hardness and materiality of outline, with a spirit of fire. The School of Athens is full of striking parts and ingenious contrasts; but I prefer to it the Convocation of Saints with that noble circle of Prophets and Apostles in the sky, on whose bent foreheads and downcast eyes you see written the City of the Blest, the beatific presence of the Most High and the Glory hereafter to be revealed, a solemn brightness and a fearful dream, and that scarce less inspired circle of sages canonised here on earth, poets, heroes, and philosophers, with the painter himself, entering on one side like the recording angel, smiling in youthful beauty, and scarce conscious of the scene he has embodied. If there is a failure in any of these frescoes, it is, I think, in the Parnassus, in which there is some-

thing quaint and affected. In the St. Peter delivered from prison, he has burst with Rembrandt into the dark chambers of night, and thrown a glory round them. In the story of Cupid and Psyche, at the Little Farnese, he has, I think, even surpassed himself in a certain swelling and voluptuous grace, as if beauty grew and ripened under his touch, and the very genius of ancient fable hovered over his enamored pencil.

L. I always believe you when you praise, not always when you condemn. Was there anything else that you saw to give you a higher idea of him than the specimens we have in this country?

H. Nothing superior to the Cartoons for boldness of design and execution; but I think his best oil pictures are abroad, though I had seen most of them before in the Louvre. I had not, however, seen the Crowning of the Virgin, which is in the picture-gallery of the Vatican, and appears to me one of his very highest-wrought pictures. The virgin in the clouds is of an admirable sedateness and dignity, and over the throng of breathing faces below there is poured a stream of joy and fervid devotion that can be compared to nothing but the golden light that evening skies pour on the edges of the surging waves. "Hope elevates, and joy brightens their every feature." The Foligno Virgin was at Paris, in which I cannot say I am quite satisfied with the Madonna; it has rather a *précieuse* expression; but I know not enough how to admire the innumerable heads of cherubs surrounding her, touched in with such care and delicacy, yet so as scarcely to be perceptible except on close inspection, nor that figure of the winged cherub below, offering the casket, and with his round, chubby face and limbs as full of rosy health and joy, as the cup is full of the juice of the purple vine. There is another picture of his I will mention, the Leo X. in the palace Pitti, "on his front engraven thought and public care;" and again, that little portrait in a cap in the Louvre, muffled in thought and buried in a kind of mental *chiaro scuro*. When I think of these and so many others of his inimitable works, "scattered like stray gifts o'er the earth," meeting our thoughts half-way, and yet carrying them farther than we should have been able of ourselves, enriching, refining,

exalting all around, I am at a loss to find motives for equal admiration or gratitude in what Michael Angelo has left, though his Prophets and Sibyls on the walls of the Sistine Chapel are *thumping make-weights* thrown into the opposite scale. It is nearly impossible to weigh or measure their different merits. Perhaps Michael Angelo's works, in their vastness and unity, may give a greater blow to some imaginations and lift the mind more out of itself, though accompanied with less delight or food for reflection, resembling the rocky precipice, whose "stately height though bare" overlooks the various excellence and beauty of subjected art.

L. I do not think your premises warrant your conclusion. If what you have said of each is true, I should give the undoubted preference to Raphael as at least the greater painter, if not the greater man. I must prefer the finest face to the largest mask.

H. I wish you could see and judge for yourself.

L. I prithee do not mock me. Proceed with your account. Was there nothing else worth mentioning after Raphael and Michael Angelo?

H. So much, that it had slipped from my memory. There are the finest statues in the world there, and they are scattered and put into niches or separate little rooms for effect, and not congregated together like a meeting of the marble gods of mythology, as was the case in the Louvre. There are some of Canova's, worked up to a high pitch of perfection, which might just as well have been left alone—and there are none, I think, equal to the Elgin marbles. A bath of one of the Antonines, a solid porphyry and as large as a good-sized room, struck me as the strongest proof of ancient magnificence. The busts are innumerable, inimitable, have a breathing clearness and transparency, revive ancient history, and are very like actual English heads and characters. The inscriptions alone on fragments of antique marble would furnish years of study to the curious or learned in that way. The vases are most elegant—of proportions and materials unrivalled in taste and in value. There are some tapestry copies of the Cartoons, very glaring and unpleasant to look at. The room containing the colored maps

of Italy, done about three hundred years ago, is one of the longest and most striking ; and the passing through it with the green hillocks, rivers and mountains on its spotty sides, is like going a delightful journey. You recall or anticipate the most interesting scenes and objects. Out of the windows of these long straggling galleries, you look down into a labyrinth of inner and of outer courts, or catch the dome of St. Peter's adjoining (like a huge shadow), or gaze at the distant amphitheatre of hills surrounding the Sacred City which excite a pleasing awe, whether considered as the haunts of banditti or from a recollection of the wondrous scene, the hallowed spot, on which they have overlooked for ages, Imperial or Papal Rome, or her commonwealth, more august than either. Here also in one chamber of the Vatican is a room stuffed full of artists, copying the Transfiguration, or the St. Jerome of Domenichino, spitting, shrugging, and taking snuff, admiring their own performances and sneering at those of their neighbors; and on certain days of the week the whole range of the rooms is thrown open without reserve to the entire population of Rome and its environs, priests and peasants, with heads not unlike those that gleam from the walls, perfect in expression and in costume, and young peasant girls in clouted shoes with looks of pleasure, timidity and wonder, such as those in which Raphael himself, from the portraits of him, might be supposed to have hailed the dawn of heaven-born art. There is also (to mention small works with great) a portrait of George the Fourth in his robes (a present to his Holiness) turned into an outer room ; and a tablet erected by him in St. Peter's to the memory of James III. Would you believe it ? Casmo Comyne Bradwardine, when he saw the averted looks of the good people of England as they proclaimed his Majesty James III. in any of the towns through which they passed, would not have believed it. Fergus Mac Ivor, when in answer to the crier of the court, who repeated "Long live King George!" he retorted, "Long live King James!" would not have believed it possible !

L. Hang your politics.

H. Never mind, if they do not hang me.

ESSAY XXII.

On Milton's Sonnets.

The great object of the Sonnet seems to be, to express in musical numbers, and as it were with undivided breath, some occasional thought or personal feeling, "some fee-grief due to the poet's breast." It is a sigh uttered from the fulness of the heart, an involuntary aspiration born and dying in the same moment. I have always been fond of Milton's Sonnets for this reason, that they have more of this personal and internal character than any others; and they acquire a double value when we consider that they come from the pen of the loftiest of our poets. Compared with Paradise Lost, they are like tender flowers that adorn the base of some proud column or stately temple. The author in the one could work himself up with unabated fortitude "to the height of his great argument;" but in the other he has shown he could condescend to men of low estate, and after the lightning and the thunder-bolt of his pen, lets fall some drops of natural pity over hapless infirmity, mingling strains with the nightingale's, "most musical, most melancholy." The immortal poet pours his mortal sorrows into our breasts, and a tear falls from his sightless orbs on the friendly hand he presses. The Sonnets are a kind of pensive record of past achievements, loves, and friendships, and a noble exhortation to himself to bear up with cheerful hope and confidence to the last. Some of them are of a more quaint and humorous character; but I speak of those only, which are intended to be serious and pathetical. I do not know indeed but they may be said to be almost the first effusions of this sort of natural and personal sentiment in the language. Drummond's ought perhaps to be excepted, were they formed less closely on the model of Petrarch's, so as to be often little more than translations of the Italian poet. But Milton's Sonnets are truly his own in allusion, thought, and versification. Those of Sir Philip

Sydney, who was a great transgressor in this way, turn sufficiently on himself and his own adventures; but they are elaborately quaint and intricate, and more like riddles than sonnets. They are "very tolerable and not to be endured." Shakspeare's, which some persons better informed in such matters than I can pretend to be, profess to cry up as "the divine, the matchless, what you will,"—to say nothing of the want of point or a leading, prominent idea in most of them, are I think overcharged and monotonous, and as to their ultimate drift, as for myself, I can make neither head nor tail of it. Yet some of them, I own, are sweet even to a sense of faintness, luscious as the woodbine, and graceful and luxuriant like it. Here is one.

"From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything;
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odor and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight.
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow, I with these did play.

I am not aware of any writer of Sonnets worth mentioning here till long after Milton, that is, till the time of Warton and the revival of a taste for Italian and for our own early literature. During the rage of French models, the Sonnet had not been much studied. It is a mode of composition that depends entirely on *expression;* and this the French and artificial style gladly dispenses with, as it lays no particular stress on anything—except vague, general common-places. Warton's Sonnets are undoubtedly exquisite, both in style and matter: they are poetical and philosophical effusions of very delightful sentiment; but the thoughts, though fine and deeply felt, are not, like Milton's subjects, identified completely with the writer, and so far want a more individual interest. Mr. Wordsworth's are

also finely conceited and high-sounding Sonnets. They mouth it well, and are said to be sacred to Liberty. Brutus's exclamation, "Oh Virtue, I thought thee a substance, but I find thee a shadow," was not considered as a compliment, but as a bitter sarcasm. The beauty of Milton's Sonnets is their sincerity, the spirit of poetical patriotism which they breathe. Either Milton's or the living bard's are defective in this respect. There is no Sonnet of Milton's on the Restoration of Charles II. There is no Sonnet of Mr. Wordsworth's, corresponding to that of "the poet blind and bold," *On the late Massacre in Piedmont.* It would be no niggard praise to Mr. Wordsworth to grant that he was either half the man or half the poet that Milton was. He has not his high and various imagination, nor his deep and fixed principle. Milton did not worship the rising sun, nor turn his back on a losing and fallen cause.

"Such recantation had no charms for him!"

Mr. Southey has thought proper to put the author of Paradise Lost into his late Heaven, on the understood condition that he is "no longer to kings and to hierarchies hostile." In his life-time he gave no sign of such an alteration; and it is rather presumptuous in the poet-laureate to pursue the deceased antagonist of Salmasius into the other world to compliment him with his own infirmity of purpose. It is a wonder he did not add in a note that Milton called him aside to whisper in his ear that he preferred the new English hexameters to his own blank verse!

Our first of poets was one of our first of men. He was an eminent instance to prove that a poet is not another name for the slave of power and fashion; as is the case with painters and musicians—things without an opinion—and who merely aspire to make up the pageant and show of the day. There are persons in common life who have that eager curiosity and restless admiration of bustle and splendor, that sooner than not be admitted on great occasions of feasting and luxurious display, they will go in the character of livery-servants to stand behind the chairs of the great. There are others who can so little bear

to be left for any length of time out of the grand carnival and masquerade of pride and folly, that they will gain admittance to it at the expense of their characters as well as of a change of dress. Milton was not one of these. He had too much of the *ideal* faculty in his composition, a lofty contemplative principle, and consciousness of inward power and worth, to be tempted by such idle baits. We have plenty of chaunting and chiming in among some modern writers with the triumphs over their own views and principles ; but none of a patient resignation to defeat, sustaining and nourishing itself with the thought of the justice of their cause, and with firm-fixed rectitude. I do not pretend to defend the tone of Milton's political writings (which was borrowed from the style of controversial divinity) or to say that he was right in the part he took :—I say that he was consistent in it, and did not convict himself of error : he was consistent in it in spite of danger and obloquy, "on evil days though fallen, and evil tongues," and therefore his character has the salt of honesty about it. It does not offend in the nostrils of posterity. He had taken his part boldly and stood to it manfully, and submitted to the change of times with pious fortitude, building his consolations on the resources of his own mind and the recollection of the past instead of endeavoring to make himself a retreat for the time to come. As an instance of this, we may take one of the best and most admired of these Sonnets, that addressed to Cyriac Skinner, on his own blindness.

"Cyriac, this three years' day, these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot,
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun or moon or star throughout the year,
Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overply'd
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe talks from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask,
Content though blind, had I no better guide."

Nothing can exceed the mild, subdued tone of this Sonnet, nor the striking grandeur of the concluding thought. It is curious to remark what seems to be a trait of character in the two first lines. From Milton's care to inform the reader that "his eyes were still clear to outward view of spot or blemish," it would be thought that he had not yet given up all regard to personal appearance; a feeling to which his singular beauty at an earlier age might be supposed naturally enough to lead. Of the political or (what may be called) his *State-Sonnets*, those to Cromwell, to Fairfax, and to the younger Vane, are full of exalted praise and dignified advice. They are neither familiar nor servile. The writer knows what is due to power and to fame. He feels the true, unassumed equality of greatness. He pays the full tribute of admiration for great acts achieved, and suggests becoming occasion to deserve higher praise. That to Cromwell is a proof how completely our poet maintained the erectness of his understanding and spirit in his intercourse with men in power. It is such a compliment as a poet might pay to a conqueror and head of the state, without the possibility of self-degradation.

"Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud,
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,
And on the neck of crowned fortune proud
Hast rear'd God's trophies and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureat wreath. Yet much remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than war: new foes arise
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains;
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw."

The most spirited and impassioned of them all, and the most inspired with a sort of prophetic fury, is the one entitled *On the late Massacre in Piedmont.*

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,

Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learn'd thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian wo."

In the Nineteenth Sonnet, which is also *On his blindness*, we see the jealous watchfulness of his mind over the use of his high gifts, and the beautiful manner in which he satisfies himself that virtuous thoughts and intentions are not the least acceptable offering to the Almighty.

"When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?
I fondly ask: But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Those to Mr. Henry Lawes *On his Airs*, and to Mr. Lawrence, can never be enough admired. They breathe the very soul of music and friendship. Both have a tender, thoughtful grace; and for their lightness, with a certain melancholy complaining intermixed, might be stolen from the harp of Æolus. The last is the picture of a day spent in social retirement and elegant relaxation from severer studies. We sit with the poet at table and hear his familiar sentiments from his own lips afterwards

"Lawrence, of virtuous father, virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won

From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well-touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of these delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

In the last, *On his deceased Wife*, the allusion to Alcestis is beautiful, and shows how the poet's mind raised and refined his thoughts by exquisite classical conceptions, and how these again were enriched by a passionate reference to actual feelings and images. It is this rare union that gives such voluptuous dignity and touching purity to Milton's delineation of the female character.

"Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heav'n without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight:
But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

There could not have been a greater mistake or a more unjust piece of criticism than to suppose that Milton only shone on great subjects; and that on ordinary occasions and in a familiar life, his mind was unwieldy, averse to the cultivation of grace and elegance, and unsusceptible of harmless pleasures. The whole tenor of his smaller compositions contradicts this opinion, which however they have been cited to confirm. The notion first got abroad from the bitterness (or vehemence) of his controversial writings, and has been kept up since with little meaning and with less truth. His Letters to Donatus and others

are not more remarkable for the display of a scholastic enthusiasm, than for that of the most amiable dispositions. They are "severe in youthful virtue unreproved." There is a passage in his prose-works (the Treatise on Education) which shows, I think, his extreme openness and proneness to pleasing outward impressions in a striking point of view. "But to return to our own institute," he says, "besides these constant exercises at home, there is another opportunity of gaining experience to be won from pleasure itself abroad. *In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature, not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoicing with Heaven and earth.* I should not therefore be a persuader to them of studying much then, but to ride out in companies with prudent and well staid guides, to all quarters of the land," &c. Many other passages might be quoted, in which the poet breaks through the ground-work of prose, as it were, by natural fecundity and a genial, unrestrained sense of delight. To suppose that a poet is not easily accessible to pleasure, or that he does not take an interest in individual objects and feelings, is to suppose that he is no poet; and proceeds on the false theory, which has been so often applied to poetry and the Fine Arts, that the whole is not made up of the particulars. If our author, according to Dr. Johnson's account of him, could only have treated epic, high-sounding subjects, he would not have been what he was, but another Sir Richard Blackmore. I may conclude with observing, that I have often wished that Milton had lived to see the Revolution of 1688. This would have been a triumph worthy of him, and which he would have earned by faith and hope. He would then have been old, but would not have lived in vain to see it, and might have celebrated the event in one more undying strain!

ESSAY XXIII.

On Coffee-house Politicians.

There is a set of people who fairly come under this denomination. They spend their time and their breath in coffee-houses and other places of public resort, hearing or repeating some new thing. They sit with a paper in their hands in the morning, and with a pipe in their mouths in the evening, discussing the contents of it. The Times, the Morning Chronicle, and the Herald are necessary to their existence: in them "they live and move and have their being." The Evening Paper is impatiently expected, and called for at a certain critical minute: the news of the morning become stale and vapid by the dinner-hour. A fresher interest is required, an appetite for the latest-stirring information is excited with the return of their meals; and a glass of old port or humming ale hardly relishes as it ought without the infusion of some lively topic that had its birth with the day, and perishes before night.

Then come in the "sweets of the evening:"—the Queen, the coronation, the last new play, the next fight, the insurrection of the Greeks or Neapolitans, the price of stocks, or death of kings, keep them on the alert till bed-time. No question comes amiss to them that is quite new—none is ever heard of that is at all old.

> "That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker."

The World before the Flood or the Intermediate State of the Soul are never once thought of—such is the quick succession of subjects, the suddenness and fugitiveness of the interest taken in them, that the Two-penny Post-Bag would be at present looked upon as an old-fashioned publication, and the Battle of Waterloo, like the proverb, is somewhat musty. It is strange that people should take so much interest at one time in what they so soon forget; the truth is, they feel no interest

in it at any time, but it does for something to talk about. Their ideas are served up to them like their bill of fare, for the day; and the whole creation, history, war, politics, morals, poetry, metaphysics, is to them like a file of antedated newspapers, of no use, not even for reference, except the one which lies on the table!—You cannot take any of these persons at a greater disadvantage than before they are provided with their cue for the day. They ask with a face of dreary vacuity, "have you anything new?"—and on receiving an answer in the negative, have nothing farther to say. Talk of the Westminster Election, the Bridge-street Association, or Mr. Cobbett's Letter to John Cropper of Liverpool, and they are alive again. Beyond the last twenty-four hours, or the narrow round in which they move, they are utterly to seek, without ideas, feelings, interests, apprehensions of any sort; so that if you betray any knowledge beyond the vulgar routine of SECOND EDITIONS and first-hand private intelligence, you pass with them for a dull fellow, not acquainted with what is going forward in the world or with the practical value of things. I have known a person of this stamp censure John Cam Hobhouse for referring so often as he does to the affairs of the Greeks and Romans, as if the affairs of the nation were not sufficient for his hands; another asks you if a General in modern times cannot throw a bridge over a river without having studied Cæsar's Commentaries; and a third cannot see the use of the learned languages, as he observed that the greatest proficients in them are rather taciturn than otherwise, and hesitate in their speech more than other people. A dearth of general information is almost necessary to the thorough-paced coffee-house politician; in the absence of thought, imagination, sentiment, he is attracted immediately to the nearest common-place, and floats through the chosen regions of noise and empty rumors without difficulty and without distraction. Meet "any six of these men in buckram," and they will accost you with the same question and the same answer; they have seen it somewhere in print, or had it from some city-oracle, that morning; and the sooner they vent their opinions the better, for they will not keep. Like tickets of admission to the theatre for a particular even-

ing, they must be used immediately, or they will be worth nothing; and the object is to find auditors for the one and customers for the other, neither of which is difficult; since people who have no ideas of their own are glad to hear what any one else has to say, as those who have not free admissions to the play will very obligingly take up with an occasional order.—It sometimes gives one a melancholy but mixed sensation to see one of the better sort of this class of politicians, not without talent or learning, absorbed for fifty years together in the all-engrossing topic of the day; mounting on it for exercise and recreation of his faculties, like the great horse at a riding school, and after his short, improgressive, untired career, dismounting just where he got up; flying abroad in continual consternation on the wings of all the newspapers; waving his arm like a pump-handle in sign of constant change, and spouting out torrents of puddled politics from his mouth; dead to all interests but those of the state; seemingly neither older nor wiser for age; unaccountably enthusiastic, stupidly romantic, and actuated by no other motive than the mechanical operations of the spirit of newsmongering !*

"What things," exclaims Beaumont in his verses to Ben Jonson, "have we not seen done at the Mermaid !'

> —— Then when there hath been thrown
> Wit able enough to justify the town
> For three days past, wit that might warrant be
> For the whole city to talk foolishly !"

* It is not very long ago that I saw two Dissenting Ministers (the *Ultima Thule* of the sanguine, visionary temperament in politics) stuffing their pipes with dried currant-leaves, calling it Radical Tobacco, lighting it with a lens in the rays of the sun, and at every puff fancying that they undermined the Boroughmongers, as Trim blew up the army opposed to the Allies! They had *deceived the Senate*. Methinks I see them now, smiling as in scorn of Corruption.

> ——"Dream on, blest pair:
> Yet happier if you knew your happiness,
> And knew to know no more!"

The world of Reform that you doat on, like Berkeley's material world, lives only in your own brain, and long may it live there! Those same Dissenting Ministers throughout the country (I mean the descendants of the old Puritans) are to this hour a sort of Fifth-monarchy men: very turbulent fellows, in my opinion altogether incorrigible, and according to the suggestions of others, should be hanged out of the way without judge or jury for the safety of church and state. Marry, hang them! they may be left to die a natural death: the race is nearly extinct of itself, and can do little more good or harm!

I cannot say the same of the S——, though it stands on classic ground, and is connected by local tradition with the great names of the Elizabethan age. What a falling off is here! Our ancestors of that period seem not only to be older by two hundred years, and proportionably wiser and wittier than we, but hardly a trace of them is left, not even the memory of what has been. How should I make my friend M—— stare, if I were to mention the name of my still better friend, old honest Signor Friscobaldo, the father of Bellafront:—yet his name was perhaps invented, and the scenes in which he figures unrivalled might for the first time have been read aloud to thrilling ears on this very spot! Who reads Deckar now? Or if by chance any one awakes the strings of that ancient lyre, and starts with delight as they yield wild, broken music, is he not accused of envy to the living Muse? What would a linen-draper from Holborn think, if I were to ask him after the clerk of St. Andrew's, the immortal, the forgotten Webster? His name and his works are no more heard of: though *these* were written with a pen of adamant, "within the red-leaved tables of the heart," his fame was "writ in water." So perishable is genius, so swift is time, so fluctuating is knowledge, and so far is it from being true that men perpetually accumulate the means of improvement and refinement. On the contrary, living knowledge is the tomb of the dead, and while light and worthless materials float on the surface, the solid and sterling as often sink to the bottom, and are swallowed up for ever in weeds and quicksands!—A striking instance of the short-lived nature of popular reputation occurred one evening at the S——, when we got into a dispute, the most learned and recondite that ever took place, on the comparative merits of Lord Byron and Gray. A country-gentleman happened to drop in, and thinking to show off in London company, launched into a lofty panegyric on the Bard of Gray as the sublimest composition in the English language. This assertion presently appeared to be an anachronism though it was probably the opinion in vogue thirty years ago when the gentleman was last in town. After a little floundering, one of the party volun-

teered to express a more contemporary sentiment, by asking in a tone of mingled confidence and doubt—"But you don't think, Sir, that Gray is to be mentioned as a poet in the same day with my Lord Byron?" The disputants were now at issue: all that resulted was that Gray was set aside as a poet who would not go down among readers of the present day, and his patron treated the works of the noble Bard as mere ephemeral effusions, and spoke of poets that would be admired thirty years hence, which was the farthest stretch of his critical imagination. His antagonist's did not even reach so far. This was the most romantic digression we ever had; and the subject was not afterwards resumed. No one here (generally speaking) has the slightest notion of anything that has happened, that has been said, thought, or done out of his own recollection. It would be in vain to hearken after those "wit-skirmishes," those "brave sublunary things," which were the employment and delight of the Beaumonts and Bens of former times; but we may happily repose on dulness, drift with the tide of nonsense, and gain an agreeable vertigo by lending an ear to endless controversies. The confusion, provided you do not mingle in the fray and try to disentangle it, is amusing and edifying enough. Every species of false wit and spurious argument may be learnt here by potent examples. Whatever observations you hear dropt, have been picked up in the same place or in a kindred atmosphere. There is a kind of conversation made up entirely of scraps and hearsay, as there are a kind of books made up entirely of references to other books. This may account for the frequent contradictions which abound in discourse of persons educated and disciplined wholly in coffee-houses. There is nothing stable or well-grounded in it: it is "nothing but vanity, chaotic vanity." They hear a remark at the Globe which they do not know what to make of; another at the Rainbow in direct opposition to it; and not having time to reconcile them, vent both at the Mitre. In the course of half an hour, if they are not more than ordinarily dull, you are sure to find them on opposite sides of the question. This is the sickening part of it. People do not seem to talk for the sake of expressing their opinions,

but to maintain an opinion for the sake of talking. We meet neither with modest ignorance nor studious acquirement. Their knowledge has been taken in too much by snatches to digest properly. There is neither sincerity nor system in what they say. They hazard the first crude notion that comes to hand, and then defend it how they can ; which is for the most part but ill. "Don't you think," says M——, "that Mr. —— is a very sensible, well-informed man?"—"Why no," I say, "he seems to me to have no ideas of his own, and only to wait to see what others will say in order to set himself against it. I should not think that is the way to get at the truth. I do not desire to be driven out of my conclusions (such as they are) merely to make way for his upstart pretensions"—"Then there is ——: what of him?"—"He might very well express all he has to say in half the time, and half the trouble. Why should he beat about the bush as he does? He appears to be getting up a little speech, and practising on a smaller scale for a Debating Society—the lowest ambition a man can have. Besides, by his manner of drawling out his words, and interlarding his periods with insinuendoes and formal reservations, he is evidently making up his mind all the time which side he shall take. He puts his sentences together as printers set up types, letter by letter. There is certainly no principle of short-hand in his mode of elocution. He goes round for a meaning, and the sense waits for him. It is not conversation, but rehearsing a part. Men of education and men of the world order this matter better. They know what they have to say on a subject, and come to the point at once. Your coffee-house politician balances between what he heard last and what he shall say next ; and not seeing his way clearly, puts you off with circumstantial phrases, and tries to gain time for fear of making a false step. This gentleman has heard some one admired for precision and copiousness of language ; and goes away, congratulating himself that he has not made a blunder in grammar or rhetoric the whole evening. He is a theoretical *Quidnunc*—is tenacious in argument, though wary ; carries his point thus and thus, bandies objections and answers with uneasy pleasantry, and when he has the worst of the dispute, puns very emphatically

on his adversary's name, if it admits of that kind of misconstruction." G—— is admired by the waiter, who is a sleek hand * for his temper in managing an argument. Any one else would perceive that the latent cause is not patience with his antagonist, but satisfaction with himself. I think this unmoved self-complacency, this cavalier smooth simpering indifference is more annoying than the extremest violence or irritability The one shows that your opponent does care something about you, and may be put out of his way by your remarks; the other seems to announce that nothing you can say can shake his opinion a jot, that he has considered the whole of what you have to offer beforehand, and that he is in all respects much wiser and more accomplished than you. Such persons talk to grown people with the same air of patronage and condescension that they do to children. "They will explain"—is a familiar expression with them, thinking you can only differ from them in consequence of misconceiving what they say. Or if you detect them in any error in point of fact (as to acknowledged deficiency in wit or argument, they would smile at the idea) they add some correction to your correction, and thus have the whip-hand of you again, being more correct than you who corrected them. If you hint some obvious oversight, they know what you are going to say, and were aware of the objection before you uttered it:—"So shall their anticipation prevent your discovery." By being in the right you gain no advantage: by being in the wrong you are entitled to the benefit of their pity or scorn! It is sometimes curious to see a select group of our little Gotham getting about a knotty point that will bear a wager, as whether Dr. Johnson's Dictionary was originally published in quarto or folio. The confident assertions, the cautious overtures, the length of time demanded to ascertain the fact, the precise terms of the forfeit, the provisos for getting out of paying it at last, lead to a long and inextricable discussion. G—— was however so convinced in his own mind that the

* William, our waiter, is dressed neatly in black, takes in the TICKLER (which many of the gentlemen like to look into), wears, I am told, a diamond-pin in his shirt-collar, has a music master to teach him to play on the flageolet two hours before the maids are up, complains of confinement and a delicate constitution, and is a complete Master Stephen in his way.

Mourning Bride was written by Shakspeare, that he ran headlong into the snare: the bet was decided, and the punch was drank. He has skill in numbers, and seldom exceeds his sevenpence.—He had a brother once, no Michael Cassio, no great arithmetician: R—— was a rare fellow, of the driest humor, and the nicest tact, of infinite slights and evasions, of a picked phraseology, and the very soul of mimicry. I fancy I have some insight into physiognomy myself, but he could often expound to me at a single glance the characters of those of my acquaintance that I had been most at fault about. The account as it was cast up and balanced between us was not always very favorable. How finely, how truly, how gaily he took off the company at the S——! Poor and faint are my sketches compared to his! It was like looking into a *camera obscura*—you saw faces shining and speaking—the smoke curled, the lights dazzled, the oak wainscoting took a higher polish—there was old S——, tall and gaunt, with his couplet from Pope and case at Nisi Prius, M—— eyeing the ventilator and lying *perdu* for a moral, and H—— and A—— taking another friendly finishing glass!——These and many more wind-falls of character he gave us in thought, word, and action. I remember his once describing three different persons together to myself and M—B——, viz., the manager of a country theatre, a tragic and a comic performer, till we were ready to tumble on the floor with laughing at the oddity of their humors, and at R——'s extraordinary powers of ventriloquism, bodily and mental; and B—— said (such was the vividness of the scene) that when he awoke the next morning, he wondered what three amusing characters he had been in company with the evening before. Oh! it was a rich treat to see him describe M—df—rd, him of the Courier, the Contemplative Man, who wrote an answer to Cœlebs, coming into a room, folding up his great coat, taking out a little pocket volume, laying it down to think, rubbing the calf of his leg with grave self-complacency, and starting out of his reverie when spoken to with an inimitable vapid exclamation of "Eh!" M—df—rd is like a man made of fleecy hosiery: R—— was lank and lean "as is the ribbed sea-sand." Yet he seemed the very man he represented, as fat, pert, and

dull as it was possible to be. I have not seen him of late :—

"For Kais is fled, and our tents are forlorn."

But I thought of him the other day when the news of the death of Bonaparte came, whom we both loved for precisely contrary reasons, he for putting down the rabble of the people, and I because he had put down the rabble of kings. Perhaps this event may rouse him from his lurking-place, where he lies like Reynard, with head declined, and feigned slumbers !*

I had almost forgotten the S—— Tavern. We for some time took C—— for a lawyer, from a certain arguteness of voice and slenderness of neck, and from his having a quibble and a laugh at himself always ready. On inquiry, however, he was found to be a patent-medicine seller, and having leisure in his apprenticeship, and a forwardness of parts, he had taken to study Blackstone and the Statutes at large. On appealing to M—— for his opinion on this matter, he observed pithily, "I don't like so much law : the gentlemen here seem fond of law, but I have

* His account of Dr. L——— was prodigious—of his occult sagacity, of his eyes prominent and wild like a hare's, fugacious of followers, of the arts by which he had left the City to lure the patients that he wanted after him to the West-End, of the ounce of tea that he purchased by stratagem as an unusual treat to his guest, and of the narrow winding staircase, from the height of which he contemplated in security the imaginary approach of duns. He was a large, plain, fair-faced Moravian preacher, turned physician. He was an honest man, but vain of he knew not what. He was once sitting where Sarratt was playing a game at chess without seeing the board; and after remaining some time absorbed in silent wonder, he turned suddenly to me and said, "Do you know, Mr. H———, that I think there is something I could do?" "Well, what is that?" "Why perhaps you would not guess, but I think I could dance, I'm sure I could: ay, I could dance like Vestris!"—Sarratt, who was a man of various accomplishments (among others one of the Fancy), afterwards bared his arm to convince us of his muscular strength, and Mrs. L———going out of the room with another lady said, "Do you know, Madam, the Doctor is a great jumper!" Molière could not outdo this. Never shall I forget his pulling off his coat to eat beef-steaks on equal terms with Martin B———. Life is short, but full of mirth and pastime, did we not so soon forget what we have laughed at, perhaps that we may not remember what we have cried at!—Sarratt, the chess-player, was an extraordinary man. He had the same tenacious, epileptic faculty in other things that he had at chess, and could no more get any other ideas out of his mind than he could those of the figures on the board. He was a great reader, but had not the least taste. Indeed the violence of his memory tyrannized over and destroyed all power of selection. He could repeat Ossian by heart, without knowing the best passage from the worst; and did not perceive he was tiring you to death by giving an account of the breed, education, and manners of fighting-dogs for hours together. The sense of reality quite superseded the distinction between the pleasurable and the painful. He was altogether a mechanical philosopher.

law enough at chambers." One sees a great deal of the humors and tempers of men in a place of this sort, and may almost gather their opinions from their characters. There is E——, a fellow that is always in the wrong—who puts might for right on all occasions—a Tory in grain—who has no one idea but what has been instilled into him by custom and authority—an everlasting babbler on the stronger side of the question—querulous and dictatorial, and with a peevish whine in his voice like a beaten school-boy. He is a great advocate for the Bourbons, and for the National Debt. The former he affirms to be the choice of the French people, and the latter he insists is necessary to the salvation of these kingdoms. This last point a little inoffensive gentleman among us, of a saturnine aspect but simple conceptions, cannot comprehend. "I will tell you, Sir —I will make my proposition so clear that you will be convinced of the truth of my observation in a moment. Consider, Sir, the number of trades that would be thrown out of employ if it were done away with: what would become of the porcelain manufacture without it?" Any stranger to overhear one of these debates would swear that the English as a nation are bad logicians. Mood and figure are unknown to them. They do not argue by the book. They arrive at conclusions through the force of prejudice, and on the principles of contradiction. Mr. E—— having thus triumphed in argument, offers a flower to the notice of the company as a specimen of his flower-garden, a curious exotic, nothing like it to be found in this kingdom, talks of his carnations, of his country-house, and old English hospitality, but never invites any of his friends to come down and take their Sunday's dinner with him. He is mean and ostentatious at the same time, insolent and servile, does not know whether to treat those he converses with as if they were his porters or his customers: the prentice-boy is not yet wiped out of him, and his imagination still hovers between his mansion at ——, and the work-house. Opposed to him and to every one else, is K——, a radical reformer and logician, who makes clear work of the taxes and national debt, reconstructs the Government from the first principles of things, shatters the Holy alliance at a blow, grinds out the future prospects of society with a machine, and

is setting out afresh with the commencement of the French Revolution five and twenty years ago, as if on an untried experiment. He minds nothing but the formal agreement of his premises and his conclusions, and does not stick at obstacles in the way nor consequences in the end. If there was but one side of the question, he would be always in the right. He casts up one column of the account to admiration, but totally forgets and rejects the other. His ideas lie like square pieces of wood in his brain, and may be said to be piled up on a stiff architectural principle, perpendicularly, and at right angles. There is no inflection, no modification, no graceful embellishment, no Corinthian capitals. I never heard him agree to two propositions together, or to more than half a one at a time. His rigid love of truth bends to nothing but his habitual love of disputation. He puts one in mind of one of those long-headed politicians and frequenters of coffee-houses mentioned in Berkeley's Minute Philosopher, who would make nothing of such old-fashioned fellows as Plato and Aristotle. He has the new light strong upon him, and he knocks other people down with its solid beams. He denies that he has got certain views out of Cobbett, though he allows that there are excellent ideas occasionally to be met with in that writer. It is a pity that this enthusiastic and unqualified regard to truth should be accompanied with an equal exactness of expenditure and unrelenting eye to the main-chance. He brings a bunch of radishes with him for cheapness, and gives a band of musicians at the door a penny, observing that he likes their performance better than all the Opera-squalling. This brings the severity of his political principles into question, if not into contempt. He would abolish the National Debt from motives of personal economy, and objects to Mr. Canning's pension because it perhaps takes a farthing a year out of his own pocket. A great deal of radical reasoning has its source in this feeling.—He bestows no small quantity of his tediousness upon M——, on whose mind all these formulas and diagrams fall like seed on stony ground: "while the manna is descending," he shakes his ears, and in the intervals of the debate, insinuates an objection, and calls for another half-pint. I have sometimes said

to him—"Any one to come in here without knowing you, would take you for the most disputatious man alive, for you are always engaged in an argument with somebody or other." The truth is, that M—— is a good natured, gentlemanly man, who notwithstanding, if appealed to, will not let an absurd or unjust proposition pass without expressing his dissent; and therefore he is a sort of a mark for all those (and we have several of that stamp) who like to teaze other people's understandings, as wool-combers teaze wool. He is certainly the flower of the flock. He is the oldest frequenter of the place, the latest sitter-up, well-informed, inobtrusive, and that sturdy old English character, a lover of truth and justice. I never knew M—— approve of anything unfair or illiberal. There is a candor and uprightness about his mind which can neither be wheedled nor brow-beat into unjustifiable complaisance. He looks straight-forward as he sits with his glass in his hand, turning neither to the right nor the left, and I will venture to say that he has never had a sinister object in view through life. Mrs. Battle (it is recorded in her Opinions on Whist) could not make up her mind to use the word "*Go.*" M—— from long practice has got over this difficulty, and uses it incessantly. It is no matter what adjunct follows in the train of this despised monosyllable:—whatever liquid comes after this prefix is welcome. M—— without being the most communicative, is the most conversible man I know. The social principle is inseparable from his person. If he has nothing to say, he drinks your health; and when you cannot from the rapidity and carelessness of his utterance catch what he says, you assent to it with equal confidence: you know his meaning is good. His favorite phrase is, "We have all of us something of the coxcomb;" and yet he has none of it himself. Before I had exchanged half a dozen sentences with M——, I found that he knew several of my old acquaintance (an immediate introduction of itself, for the discussing the characters and foibles of common friends is a great sweetener and cement of friendship)—and had been intimate with most of the wits and men about town for the last twenty years. He knew Tobin, Wordsworth, Porson, Wilson, Paley, Erskine, and many others. He speaks of Paley's pleasantry and unassuming manners, and describes Porson's long potations and long quotations

formerly at the Cider-Cellar in a very lively way. He has doubts, however, as to that sort of learning. On my saying that I had never seen the Greek Professor but once, at the Library of the London Institution, when he was dressed in an old rusty black coat, with cobwebs hanging to the skirts of it, and with a large patch of coarse brown paper covering the whole length of his nose, looking for all the world like a drunken carpenter, and talking to one of the Proprietors with an air of suavity, approaching to condescension, M—— could not help expressing some little uneasiness for the credit of classical literature. "I submit, Sir, whether common sense is not the principal thing? What is the advantage of genius and learning if they are of no use in the conduct of life?"—M—— is one who loves the hours that usher in the morn, when a select few are left in twos and threes like stars before the break of day, and when the discourse and the ale are "aye growing better and better." W——, M——, and myself were all that remained one evening. We had sat together several hours without being tired of one another's company. The conversation turned on the Beauties of Charles the Second's Court at Windsor, and from thence to Count Grammont, their gallant and gay historian. We took our favorite passages in turn —one preferring that of Killigrew's country-cousin, who having been resolutely refused by Miss Warminster (one of the Maids of Honor) when he found she had been unexpectedly brought to bed, fell on his knees and thanked God that now she might take compassion on him—another insisting that the Chevalier Hamilton's assignation with Lady Chesterfield, when she kept him all night shivering in an old out-house, was better. Jacob Hall's prowess was not forgotten, nor the story of Miss Stuart's garters. I was getting on in my way with that delicate *endroit*, in which Miss Churchill is first introduced at court and is besieged (as a matter of course) by the Duke of York, who was gallant as well as bigoted on system. His assiduities however soon slackened, owing (it is said) to her having a pale, thin face; till one day, as they were riding out hunting together, she fell from her horse, and was taken up almost lifeless. The whole assembled court were thrown by this event into admiration that such a body should

belong to such a face* (so transcendant a pattern was she of the female form) and the Duke was fixed. This I contended was striking, affecting, and grand, the sublime of amorous biography, and said I could conceive of nothing finer than the idea of a young person in her situation, who was the object of indifference or scorn from outward appearance, with the proud suppressed consciousness of a Goddess-like symmetry, locked up by "fear and niceness, the hand-maids of all women," from the wonder and worship of mankind. I said so then, and I think so now: my tongue grew wanton in the praise of this passage, and I believe it bore the bell from its competitors. W—— then spoke of Lucius Apuleius and his Golden Ass, which contains the story of Cupid and Psyche, with other matter rich and rare, and went on to the romance of Heliodorus, Theagenes and Chariclea. This, as he affirmed, opens with a pastoral landscape equal to Claude, and in it the presiding deities of Love and Wine appear in all their pristine strength, youth and grace, crowned and worshipped as of yore. The night waned, but our glasses brightened, enriched with the pearls of Grecian story. Our cup-bearer slept in a corner of the room like another Endymion, in the pale ray of a half-extinguished lamp, and starting up at a fresh summons for a farther supply, he swore it was too late, and was inexorable to entreaty. M—— sat with his hat on and with a hectic flush in his face while any hope remained, but as soon as we rose to go, he darted out of the room as quick as lightning, determined not to be the last that went. —I said some time after to the waiter, that "Mr. M—— was no flincher."—"Oh! Sir," says he, "you should have known him formerly, when Mr. H—— and Mr. A—— used to be here. Now he is quite another man: he seldom stays later than one or two."—"Why, did they keep it up much later then?"—"Oh! yes; and used to sing catches and all sorts."—"What, did Mr. M—— sing catches?"—"He joined the chorus, Sir, and was as merry as the best of them. He was always a pleasant gentleman!"—This H—— and A—— succumbed in the fight. A—— was a dry Scotchman, H—— a good-natured, hearty English-

* "Ils ne pouvoient croire qu'un corps de cette beauté fût de quelque chose au visage de Mademoiselle Churchill."—MEMOIRES DE GRAMMONT. Vol. ii., p. 254.

man. I do not mean that the same character applies to all Scotchmen, or to all Englishmen. H—— was of the Pipe-Office (not unfitly appointed), and in his cheerfuller cups would delight to speak of a widow and a bowling-green, that ran in his head to the last. "What is the good of those things now?" said the man of utility. "I don't know," replied the other, quaffing another glass of sparkling ale, and with a lambent fire playing in his eye and round his bald forehead—(he had a head that Sir Joshua would have made something bland and genial of)—"I don't know, but they were delightful to me at the time, and are still pleasant to talk and think of."—*Such a one*, in Touchstone's phrase, *is a natural philosopher;* and in nine cases out of ten that sort of philosophy is the best! I could enlarge this sketch, such as it is; but to prose on to the end of the chapter might prove less profitable than tedious.

I like very well to sit in a room where there are people talking on subjects I know nothing of, if I am only allowed to sit silent and as a spectator. But I do not much like to join in the conversation, except with people and on subjects to my taste. Sympathy is necessary to society. To look on, a variety of faces, humors, and opinions is sufficient: to mix with others, agreement as well as variety is indispensable. What makes good society? I answer, in one word, real fellowship. Without a similitude of tastes, acquirements, and pursuits (whatever may be the difference of tempers and characters), there can be no intimacy or even casual intercourse worth the having. What makes the most agreeable party? A number of people with a number of ideas in common, "yet so as with a difference;" that is, who can put one or more subjects which they have all studied in the greatest variety of entertaining or useful lights. Or in other words, a succession of good things said with good humor, and addressed to the understandings of those who hear them, make the most desirable conversation. Ladies, lovers, beaux, wits, philosophers, the fashionable or the vulgar, are the fittest company for one another. The discourse at Randall's is the best for boxers: that at Long's for lords and loungers. I prefer Hunt's conversation almost to any other person's, because, with a familiar range of subjects, he colors with a totally new and sparkling

light, reflected from his own character. Elia, the grave and witty, says things not to be surpassed in essence: but the manner is more painful and less a relief to my own thoughts. Some one conceived he could not be an excellent companion, because he was seen walking down the side of the Thames, *passibus iniquis*, after dining at Richmond. The objection was not valid. I will however admit that the said Elia is the worst company in the world in bad company, if it be granted me that in good company he is nearly the best that can be. He is one of those of whom it may be said, *Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners*. He is the creature of sympathy, and makes good whatever opinion you seem to entertain of him. He cannot outgo the apprehensions of the circle; and invariably acts up or down to the point of refinement or vulgarity at which they pitch him. He appears to take a pleasure in exaggerating the prejudices of strangers against him; a pride in confirming the prepossessions of friends. In whatever scale of intellect he is placed, he is as lively or as stupid as the rest can be for their lives. If you think him odd and ridiculous, he becomes more and more so every minute, *à la folie*, till he is a wonder gazed by all—set him against a good wit and a ready apprehension, and he brightens more and more—

> "Or like a gate of steel
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> Its figure and its heat."

We had a pleasant party one evening at Barry Cornwall's. A young literary bookseller who was present went away delighted with the elegance of the repast, and spoke in raptures of a servant in green livery and a patent-lamp. I thought myself that the charm of the evening consisted in some talk about Beaumont and Fletcher and the old poets, in which every one took part or interest, and in a consciousness that we could not pay our host a better compliment than in thus alluding to studies in which he excelled, and in praising authors whom he had imitated with feeling and sweetness!—I should think it may be also laid down as a rule on this subject, that to constitute good company a certain proportion of hearers and speakers is requisite. Coleridge makes

good company for this reason. He immediately establishes the principle of the division of labor in this respect, wherever he comes. He takes his cue as speaker, and the rest of the party theirs as listeners—a "Circean herd"—without any previous arrangement having been gone through. I will just add that there can be no good society without perfect freedom from affectation and constraint. If the unreserved communication of feeling or opinion leads to offensive familiarity, it is not well. But it is no better where the absence of offensive remarks arises only from formality and an assumed respectfulness of manner.

I do not think there is anything deserving the name of society to be found out of London: and that for the two following reasons. First, there is *neighborhood* elsewhere, accidental or unavoidable acquaintance: people are thrown together by chance or grow together like trees; but you can pick your society nowhere but in London. The very persons that of all others you would wish to associate with in almost every line of life (or at least of intellectual pursuit), are to be met with there. It is hard if out of a million of people you cannot find half a dozen to your liking. Individuals may seem lost and hid in the size of the place: but in fact from this very circumstance you are within two or three miles' reach of persons that without it you would be some hundreds apart from. Secondly, London is the only place in which each individual in company is treated according to his value in company, and to that only. In every other part of the kingdom he carries another character about with him, which supersedes the intellectual or social one. It is known in Manchester or Liverpool what every man in the room is worth in land or money; what are his connexions and prospects in life —and this gives a character of servility or arrogance, of mercenariness or impertinence to the whole of provincial intercourse. You laugh not in proportion to a man's wit, but his wealth: you have to consider not what, but whom you contradict. You speak by the pound, and are heard by the rood. In the metropolis there is neither time nor inclination for these remote calculations. Every man depends on the quantity of sense, wit, or good manners he brings into society for the reception he meets with in it. A member of parliament soon finds his level as a commoner:

the merchant and manufacturer cannot bring his goods to market here: the great landed proprietor shrinks from being the lord of acres into a pleasant companion or a dull fellow. When a visitor enters or leaves a room, it is not inquired whether he is rich or poor, whether he lives in a garret or a palace, or comes in his own or a hackney-coach, but whether he has a good expression of countenance, with an unaffected manner, and whether he is a man of understanding or a blockhead. These are the circumstances by which you make a favorable impression on the company, and by which they estimate you in the abstract. In the country, they consider whether you have a vote at the next election, or a place in your gift; and measure the capacity of others to instruct or entertain them by the strength of their pockets and their credit with their banker. Personal merit is at a prodigious discount in the provinces. I like the country very well, if I want to enjoy my own company: but London is the only place for equal society, or where a man can say a good thing or express an honest opinion without subjecting himself to being insulted, unless he first lays his purse on the table to back his pretensions to talent or independence of spirit. I speak from experience.*

* When I was young, I spent a good deal of my time at Manchester and Liverpool; and I confess I give the preference to the former. There you were oppressed only by the aristocracy of wealth; in the latter by the aristocracy of wealth and letters by turns. You could not help feeling that some of their great men were authors among merchants and merchants among authors. The bread was buttered on both sides, and they had you at a disadvantage either way. The Manchester cotton-spinners, on the contrary, set up no pretensions beyond their looms, were hearty good fellows, and took any information or display of ingenuity on other subjects in good part. I remember well being introduced to a distinguished patron of art and rising merit at a little distance from Liverpool, and was received with every mark of attention and politeness, till the conversation turning on Italian literature, our host remarked that there was nothing in the English language corresponding to the severity of the Italian ode—except perhaps Dryden's Alexander's Feast, and Pope's St. Cecilia! I could no longer contain my desire to display my smattering in criticism, and began to maintain that Pope's Ode was, as it appeared to me, far from an example of severity in writing. I soon perceived what I had done, but here am I writing *Table-talks* in consequence. Alas! I knew as little of the world then as I do now. I never could understand anything beyond an abstract definition.

ESSAY XXIV.

On the Aristocracy of Letters.

"Ha! here's three of us are sophisticated :—off, you lendings."——

THERE is such a thing as an aristocracy or privileged order in letters, which has sometimes excited my wonder, and sometimes my spleen. We meet with authors who have never done anything, but who have a vast reputation for what they could have done. Their names stand high, and are in everybody's mouth, but their works are never heard of, or had better remain undiscovered for the sake of their admirers.—*Stat nominis umbra*—their pretensions are lofty and unlimited, as they have nothing to rest upon, or because it is impossible to confront them with the proofs of their deficiency. If you inquire farther, and insist upon some act of authorship to establish the claims of these Epicurean votaries of the Muses, you find that they had a great reputation at Cambridge, that they were senior wranglers or successful prize-essayists, that they visit at —— House, and to support that honor, must be supposed of course to occupy the first rank in the world of letters.* It is possible, however, that they have some manuscript work in hand, which is of too much importance (and the writer has too much at stake in publishing

* Lord H—— had made a diary (in the manner of Boswell) of the conversation held at his house, and read it at the end of a week *pro bono publico*. Sir J— M—— made a considerable figure in it, and a celebrated poet none at all, merely answering Yes and No. With this result he was by no means satisfied, and talked incessantly from that day forward. At the end of the week he asked, with some anxiety and triumph, if his Lordship had continued his diary, expecting himself to shine in "the first row of the rubric." To which his Noble Patron answered in the negative, with an intimation that it had not appeared to him worth while. Our poet was thus thrown again into the back ground, and Sir James remained master of the field!

i) hastily to see the light: or perhaps they once had an article in the Edinburgh Review, which was admired at the time, and is kept by them ever since as a kind of diploma and unquestionable testimonial of merit. They are not like Grub-street authors, who write for bread, and are paid by the sheet. Like misers who hoard their wealth, they are supposed to be masters of all the wit and sense they do not impart to the public. "Continents have most of what they contain," says a considerable philosopher; and these persons, it must be confessed, have a prodigious command over themselves in the expenditure of light and learning. The Oriental curse—"O that mine enemy had written a book"—hangs suspended over them. By never committing themselves, they neither give a handle to the malice of the world, nor excite the jealousy of friends; and keep all the reputation they have got, not by discreetly blotting, but by never writing a line. Some one told Sheridan, who was always busy about some new work and never advancing any farther in it, that he would not write because he was afraid of the Author of the School for Scandal. So these idle pretenders are afraid of undergoing a comparison with themselves in something they have never done, but have had credit for doing. They do not acquire celebrity, they assume it; and escape detection by never venturing out of their imposing and mysterious *incognito*. They do not let themselves down by every-day work: for them to appear in print is a work of supererogation as much as in lords or kings, and like gentlemen with a large landed estate, they live on their established character, and do nothing (or as little as possible) to increase or lose it. There is not a more deliberate piece of grave imposture going. I know a person of this description who has been employed many years (by implication) on a translation of Thucydides, of which no one ever saw a word, but it does not answer the purpose of bolstering up a factitious reputation the less on that account. The longer it is delayed and kept sacred from the vulgar gaze, the more it swells into imaginary consequence: the labor and care required for a work of this kind being immense:—and then there are no faults in an unexecuted translation. The only impeccable writers are those who never wrote. Another is an oracle on subjects of taste and classical erudition, because (he says at least) he

reads Cicero once a year to keep up the purity of his Latinity. A third makes the indecency pass for the depth of his researches and for a high gusto in *virtù*, till from his seeing nothing in the finest remains of ancient art, the world by the merest accident find out that there is nothing in him. There is scarcely anything that a grave face with an impenetrable manner will not accomplish, and whoever is weak enough to impose upon himself, will have wit enough to impose upon the public—particularly if he can make it their interest to be deceived by shallow boasting, and contrives not to hurt their self-love by sterling acquirements. Do you suppose that the understood translation of Thucydides costs its supposed author nothing? A select party of friends and admirers dine with him once a week at a magnificent town-mansion, or a more elegant and picturesque retreat in the country. They broach their Horace and their old hock, and sometimes allude with a considerable degree of candor to the defects of works which are brought out by contemporary writers—the ephemeral offspring of haste and necessity!

Among other things, the learned languages are a ready passport to this sort of unmeaning, unanalysed reputation. They presently lift a man up among the celestial constellations, the signs of the Zodiac (as it were) and third heaven of inspiration, from whence he looks down on those who are toiling on in this lower sphere, and earning their bread by the sweat of their brain, at leisure and in scorn. If the graduates in this way condescend to express their thoughts in English, it is understood to be *infra dignitatem*—such light and unaccustomed essays do not fit the ponderous gravity of their pen—they only draw to advantage and with full justice to themselves in the bow of the ancients. Their native-tongue is to them strange, inelegant, unapt, and crude. They "cannot command it to any utterance of harmony. They have not the skill." This is true enough, but you must not say so, under a heavy penalty—the displeasure of pedants and blockheads. It would be sacrilege against the privileged classes, the Aristocracy of Letters. What! will you affirm that a profound Latin scholar, a perfect Grecian, cannot write a page of common sense or grammar?—Is it not to be presumed, by all the charters of the Universities and the foundations of grammar-schools, that

he who can speak a dead language must be *à fortiori* conversant with his own? Surely, the greater implies the less. He who knows every science and every art cannot be ignorant of the most familiar forms of speech. Or if this plea is found not to hold water, then our scholastic bungler is said to be above this vulgar trial of skill, "something must be excused to want of practice—but did you not observe the elegance of the Latinity, how well that period would become a classical and studied dress?" Thus defects are "monstered" into excellences, and they screen their idol, and require you, at your peril, to pay prescriptive homage to false concords and inconsequential criticisms, because the writer of them has the character of the first or second Greek or Latin scholar in the kingdom. If you do not swear to the truth of these spurious credentials, you are ignorant and malicious, a quack and a scribbler—*flagranti delicto!* Thus the man who can merely read and construe some old author is of a class superior to any living one, and, by parity of reasoning, to those old authors themselves: the poet or prose-writer of true and original genius, by the courtesy of custom, "ducks to the learned fool:" or as the author of Hudibras has so well stated the same thing,

> ——— "He that is but able to express
> No sense at all in several languages,
> Will pass for learneder than he that's known
> To speak the strongest reason in his own."

These preposterous and unfounded claims of mere scholars to precedence in the commonwealth of letters, which they set up so formally themselves and which others so readily bow to, are partly owing to traditional prejudice:—there was a time when learning was the only distinction from ignorance, and when there was no such thing as popular English literature. Again, there is something more palpable and positive in this kind of acquired knowledge, like acquired wealth, which the vulgar easily recognize. That others know the meaning of signs which they are confessedly and altogether ignorant of, is to them both a matter of fact and a subject of endless wonder. The languages are worn like a dress by a man, and distinguish him sooner than his natural figure; and we are, from motives of self-love, inclined to

give others credit for the ideas they have borrowed or have come into direct possession of, rather than for those that originally belong to them and are exclusively their own. The merit in them and the implied inferiority in ourselves is less. Learning is a kind of external appendage or transferable property—

" 'T was mine, 't is his, and may be any man's"—

Genius and understanding are a man's self, an integrant part of his personal identity ; and the title to these last, as it is the most difficult to be ascertained, is also the most grudgingly acknowledged. Few persons would pretend to deny that Porson had more Greek than they. It was a question of fact which might be put to the immediate proof, and could not be gainsaid. But the meanest frequenter of the Cider-cellar or the Hole in the Wall would be inclined, in his own conceit, to dispute the palm of wit or sense with him ; and indemnify his self-complacency for the admiration paid to living learning by significant hints to friends and casual droppers-in, that the greatest men, when you came to know them, were not without their weak sides as well as others. Pedants, I will add here, talk to the vulgar as pedagogues talk to school-boys, on an understood principle of condescension and superiority, and therefore make little progress in the knowledge of men or things. While they fancy they are accommodating themselves to, or else assuming airs of importance over, inferior capacities, these inferior capacities are really laughing at them. There can be no true superiority but what arises out of the presupposed ground of equality ; there can be no improvement but from the free communication and comparing of ideas. Kings and nobles, for this reason, receive little benefit from society—where all is submission on one side, and condescension on the other. The mind strikes out truth by collision, as steel strikes fire from the flint!

There are whole families who are born classical, and are entered in the heralds' college of reputation by the right of consanguinity. Literature, like nobility, runs in the blood. There is the B—— family. There is no end of it or its pretensions It produces wits, scholars, novelists, musicians, artists in " num-

bers numberless." The name is alone a passport to the Temple of Fame. Those who bear it are free of Parnassus by birthright. The founder of it was himself an historian and a musician, but more of a courtier and a man of the world than either. The secret of his success may perhaps be discovered in the following passage, where, in alluding to three eminent performers on different instruments, he says, "These three illustrious personages were introduced at the Emperor's court," &c.; speaking of them as if they were foreign ambassadors or princes of the blood, and thus magnifying himself and his profession. This overshadowing manner carries nearly everything before it, and mystifies a great many. There is nothing like putting the best face upon things, and leaving others to find out the difference. He who could call three musicians "personages," would himself play a personage through life, and succeed in his leading object. Sir Joshua Reynolds, remarking on this passage, said, "No one had a greater respect than he had for his profession, but that he should never think of applying to it epithets that were appropriated merely to external rank and distinction." Madame D——, it must be owned, had cleverness enough to stock a whole family, and to set up her cousin-germans, male and female, for wits and virtuosos to the third and fourth generation. The rest have done nothing, that I know of, but keep up the name.

The most celebrated author in modern times has written without a name, and has been knighted for anonymous productions. Lord Byron complains that Horace Walpole was not properly appreciated, "first, because he was a gentleman, and secondly, because he was a nobleman." His Lordship stands in one, at least, of the predicaments here mentioned, and yet he has had justice, or somewhat more, done him. He towers above his fellows by all the height of peerage. If the poet lends a grace to the nobleman, the nobleman pays it back to the poet with interest. What a fine addition is ten thousand a year and a title to the flaunting pretensions of a modern rhapsodist! His name so accompanied becomes the mouth well: it is repeated thousands of times, instead of hundreds, because the reader in being familiar with the Poet's works seems to claim acquaintance with the Lord.

> "Let but a lord once own the happy lines:
> How the wit brightens, and the style refines!"

He smiles at the high-flown praise or petty cavils of little men. Does he make a slip in decorum, which Milton declares to be the principal thing? His proud crest and armorial bearings support him:—no bend-sinister slurs his poetical escutcheon! Is he dull, or does he put off some trashy production on the public? It is not charged to his account, as a deficiency which he must make good at the peril of his admirers. His Lordship is not answerable for the negligence or extravagances of his Muse. He "bears a charmed reputation, which must not yield" like one of vulgar birth. The noble Bard is for this reason scarcely vulnerable to the critics. The double barrier of his pretensions baffles their puny timid efforts. Strip off some of his tarnished laurels, and the coronet appears glittering beneath: restore them, and it still shines through with keener lustre. In fact, his Lordship's blaze of reputation culminates from his rank and place in society. He sustains two lofty and imposing characters; and in order to simplify the process of our admiration, and "leave no rubs or botches in the way," we equalize his pretensions, and take it for granted that he must be as superior to other men in genius as he is in birth. Or, to give a more familiar solution of the enigma, the Poet and the Peer agree to honor each other's acceptances on the bank of Fame, and sometimes cozen the town to some tune between them.—Really, however, and with all his privileges, Lord Byron might as well not have written that strange letter about Pope. I could not afford it, poor as I am. Why does he pronounce, *ex cathedrâ* and robed, that Cowper is no poet? Cowper was a gentleman and of noble family like his critic. He was a teacher of morality as well as a describer of nature, which is more than his Lordship is. His John Gilpin will last as long as Beppo, and his verses to Mary are not less touching than the Farewell. If I had ventured upon such an assertion as this, it would have been worse for me than finding out a borrowed line in the Pleasures of Hope.

There is not a more helpless or more despised animal than a mere author, without any extrinsic advantages of birth, breeding,

or fortune to set him off. The real ore of talents or learning must be stamped before it will pass current. To be at all looked upon as an author, a man must be something more or less than an author—a rich merchant, a banker, a lord, or a ploughman. He is admired for something foreign to himself, that acts as a bribe to the servility or a set-off to the envy of the community. "What should such fellows as we do, crawling betwixt heaven and earth;"—"coining our hearts for drachmas;" now scorched in the sun, now shivering in the breeze, now coming out in our newest gloss and best attire, like swallows in the spring, now "sent back like hollowmas or shortest day?" The best wits, like the handsomest faces *upon the town*, lead a harassing, precarious life—are taken up for the bud and promise of talent, which they no sooner fulfil than they are thrown aside like an old fashion—are caressed without reason, and insulted with impunity—are subject to all the caprice, the malice, and fulsome advances of that great keeper, the Public—and in the end come to no good, like all those who lavish their favors on mankind at large and look to the gratitude of the world for their reward. Instead of this set of Grub-street authors, the mere *canaille* of letters, this corporation of Mendicity, this ragged regiment of genius suing at the corners of streets *in forma pauperis*, give me the gentleman and scholar, with a good house over his head and a handsome table "with wine of Attic taste" to ask his friends to, and where want and sorrow never come. Fill up the sparkling bowl, heap high the dessert with roses crowned, bring out the hot-pressed poem, the vellum manuscripts, the medals, the portfolios, the intaglios—this is the true model of the life of a man of taste and *virtù*—the possessors, not the inventors of these things, are the true benefactors of mankind and ornaments of letters. Look in, and there, amidst silver services and shining chandeliers, you will see the man of genius at his proper post, picking his teeth and mincing an opinion, sheltered by rank, bowing to wealth—a poet framed, glazed, and hung in a striking light: not a straggling weed, torn and trampled on; not a poor *Kit-run-the-street*, but a powdered beau, a sycophant plant, an exotic reared in a glass case, hermetically sealed,

"Free from the Sirian star and the chread thunder-stroke"

whose mealy coat no moth can corrupt nor blight can wither. The poet Keats had not this sort of protection for his person—he lay bare to weather—the serpent stung him, and the poison-tree dropped upon this little western flower:—when the mercenary servile crew approached him, he had no pedigree to show them, no rent-roll to hold out in reversion for their praise: he was not in any great man's train, nor the butt and puppet of a lord—he could only offer them the "fairest flowers of the season, carnations and streaked gilliflowers,"—"rue for remembrance and pansies for thoughts"—they recked not of his gift, but tore him with hideous shouts and laughter,

"Nor could the Muse protect her son!"

Unless an author has an establishment of his own, or is entered on that of some other person, he will hardly be allowed to write English or to spell his own name. To be well-spoken of, he must enlist under some standard; he must belong to some *coterie*. He must get the *esprit de corps* on his side: he must have literary bail in readiness. Thus they prop one another's ricketty heads at Murray's shop, and a spurious reputation, like false argument, runs in a circle. Croker affirms that Gifford is sprightly, and Gifford that Croker is genteel: D'Israeli that Jacob is wise, and Jacob that D'Israeli is good-natured. A Member of Parliament must be answerable that you are not dangerous or dull before you can be of the *entrée*. You must commence toad-eater to have your observations attended to; if you are independent, unconnected, you will be regarded as a poor creature. Your opinion is honest, you will say: then ten to one, it is not profitable. It is at any rate your own. So much the worse; for then it is not the world's. T——— is a very tolerable barometer in this respect. He knows nothing, hears everything, and repeats just what he hears; so that you may guess pretty well from this round-faced echo what is said by others! Almost everything goes by presumption and appearances. "Did you not think Mr. B——'s language very elegant?"—I thought he bowed very low. "Did you not think him remarkably well-behaved?"—He was unexceptionably dressed. "But were not Mr. C——'s manners quite insinuating?"—He said nothing. "You will at least

allow his friend to be a well-informed man ?"—He talked upon all subjects alike. Such would be a pretty faithful interpretation of the tone of what is called *good society*. The surface is everything: we do not pierce to the core. The setting is more valuable than the jewel. Is it not so in other things as well as letters? Is not an R. A. by the supposition a greater man in his profession than any one who is not so blazoned? Compared with that unrivalled list, Raphael had been illegitimate, Claude not classical, and Michael Angelo admitted by special favor. What is a physician without a diploma? An alderman without being knighted? An actor whose name does not appear in great letters? All others are counterfeits—men "of no mark or likelihood." This was what made the Jackalls of the North so eager to prove that I had been turned out of the Edinburgh Review. It was not the merit of the articles which excited their spleen—but their being there. Of the style they knew nothing; for the thought they cared nothing:—all that they knew was that I wrote in that powerful journal, and therefore they asserted that I did not!

We find a class of persons who labor under an obvious natural inaptitude for whatever they aspire to. Their manner of setting about it is a virtual disqualification. The simple affirmation—"What this man has said, I will do,"—is not always considered as the proper test of capacity. On the contrary, there are people whose bare pretensions are as good or better than the actual performance of others. What I myself have done, for instance, I never find admitted as proof of what I shall be able to do: whereas I observe others who bring as proof of their competence to any task (and are taken at their word) what they have never done, and who gravely assure those who are inclined to trust them that their talents are exactly fitted for some post because they are just the reverse of what they have ever shown them to be. One man has the air of an Editor as much as another has that of a butler or a porter in a gentleman's family. —— is the model of this character, with a prodigious look of business, an air of suspicion which passes for sagacity, and an air of deliberation which passes for judgment. If his own talents are no ways prominent, it is inferred he will be more impartial and in earnest in making use

of those of others. There is ———, the responsible conductor of several works of taste and erudition, yet (God knows) without an idea in his head relating to any one of them. He is learned by proxy, and successful from sheer imbecility. If he were to get the smallest smattering of the departments which are under his control, he would betray himself from his desire to shine; but as it is, he leaves others to do all the drudgery for him. He signs his name in the title-page or at the bottom of a vignette, and nobody suspects any mistake. This contractor for useful and ornamental literature once offered me Two Guineas for a Life and Character of Shakspeare, with an admission to his *conversationes*. I went once. There was a collection of learned lumber, of antiquaries, lexicographers, and other Illustrious Obscure, and I had given up the day for lost, when in dropped Jack T. of the Sun—(Who would dare to deny that he was "the Sun of our table?")—and I had nothing now to do but hear and laugh. Mr. T——— knows most of the good things that have been said in the metropolis for the last thirty years, and is in particular an excellent retailer of the humors and extravagances of his old friend, Peter Pindar. He had recounted a series of them, each rising above the other in a sort of magnificent burlesque and want of literal preciseness, to a medley of laughing and sour faces, when on his proceeding to state a joke of a practical nature by the said Peter, a Mr. —— (I forget the name) objected to the moral of the story, and to the whole texture of Mr. T——'s *facetiæ*—upon which our host, who had till now supposed that all was going on swimmingly, thought it time to interfere and give a turn to the conversation by saying—"Why yes, Gentlemen, what we have hitherto heard fall from the lips of our friend has been no doubt entertaining and highly agreeable in its way: but perhaps we have had enough of what is altogether delightful and pleasant and light and laughable in conduct. Suppose, therefore, we were to shift the subject, and talk of what is serious and moral and industrious and laudable in character—Let us talk of Mr. Tomkins, the Penman!"—This staggered the gravest of us, broke up our dinner-party, and we went up stairs to tea. So much for the didactic vein of one of our principal guides in the embellished walks of modern taste, and master-manufacturers of letters. He

had found that gravity had been a never-failing resource when taken at a pinch—for once the joke miscarried—and Mr. Tomkins the Penman figures to this day nowhere but in Sir Joshua's picture of him!

To complete the natural Aristocracy of Letters, we only want a Royal Society of Authors!

ESSAY XXV.

On Criticism.

Criticism is an art that undergoes a great variety of changes, and aims at different objects at different times.

At first, it is generally satisfied to give an opinion whether a work is good or bad, and to quote a passage or two in support of this opinion: afterwards, it is bound to assign the reasons of its decision and to analyse supposed beauties or defects with microscopic minuteness. A critic does nothing now-a-days who does not try to torture the most obvious expression into a thousand meanings, and enter into a circuitous explanation of all that can be urged for or against its being in the best or worst style possible. His object indeed is not to do justice to his author, whom he treats with very little ceremony, but to do himself homage, and to show his acquaintance with all the topics and resources of criticism. If he recurs to the stipulated subject in the end, it is not till after he has exhausted his budget of general knowledge; and he establishes his own claims first in an elaborate inaugural dissertation *de omni scibile et quibusdam aliis*, before he deigns to bring forward the pretensions of the original candidate for praise, who is only the second figure in the piece. We may sometimes see articles of this sort, in which no allusion whatever is made to the work under sentence of death, after the first announcement of the title page; and I apprehend it would be a clear improvement on this species of nominal criticism, to give stated periodical accounts of works that had never appeared at all, which would save the hapless author the mortification of writing, and his reviewer the trouble of reading them. If the real author is made of so little account by the modern critic, he is scarcely more an object of regard to the modern reader; and it must be confessed that after a dozen close-packed pages of subtle metaphysical dis-

tinction or solemn didactic declamation, in which the disembodied principles of all arts and sciences float before the imagination in undefined profusion, the eye turns with impatience and indifference to the imperfect embryo specimens of them, and the hopeless attempts to realize this splendid jargon in one poor work by one poor author, which is given up to summary execution with as little justice as pity. "As when a well-graced actor leaves the stage, men's eyes are idly bent on him that enters next"—so it is here. Whether this state of the press is not a serious abuse and a violent encroachment in the republic of letters is more than I shall pretend to determine. The truth is, that in the quantity of works that issue from the press, it is utterly impossible they should all be read by all sorts of people. There must be *tasters* for the public, who must have a discretionary power vested in them, for which it is difficult to make them properly accountable. Authors in proportion to their numbers become not formidable but despicable. They would not be heard of or severed from the crowd without the critic's aid, and all complaints of ill-treatment are vain. He considers them as pensioners on his bounty for any pittance of praise, and in general sets them up as butts for his wit and spleen, or uses them as a stalking-horse to convey his own favorite notions and opinions, which he can do by this means without the possibility of censure or appeal. He looks upon his literary *protegé* (much as Peter Pounce looked upon Parson Adams) as a kind of humble companion or unnecessary interloper in the vehicle of fame, whom he has taken up purely to oblige him, and whom he may treat with neglect or insult, or set down in the common foot-path, whenever it suits his humor or convenience. He naturally grows arbitrary with the exercise of power. He by degrees wants to have a clear stage to himself, and would be thought to have purchased a monopoly of wit, learning, and wisdom—

> "Assumes the rod, affects the God,
> And seems to shake the spheres."

Besides, something of this overbearing manner goes a great way with the public. They cannot exactly tell whether you are right or wrong; and if you state your difficulties or pay much deference

to the sentiments of others, they will think you a very silly fellow or a mere pretender. A sweeping, unqualified assertion ends all controversy, and sets opinion at rest. A sharp, sententious, cavalier, dogmatical tone is therefore necessary, even in self-defence, to the office of a reviewer. If you do not deliver your oracles without hesitation, how are the world to receive them on trust and without inquiry? People read to have something to talk about, and "to seem to know that which they do not." Consequently, there cannot be too much dialectics, and debateable matter, too much pomp and paradox in a review. *To elevate and surprise* is the great rule for producing a dramatic or a critical effect. The more you startle the reader, the more he will be able to startle others with a succession of smart intellectual shocks. The most admired of our Reviews is saturated with this sort of electrical matter, which is regularly played off so as to produce a good deal of astonishment and a strong sensation in the public mind. The intrinsic merits of an author are a question of very subordinate consideration to the keeping up the character of the work and supplying the town with a sufficient number of grave or brilliant topics for the consumption of the next three months!

This decided and paramount tone in criticism is the growth of the present century, and was not at all the fashion in that calm peaceable period when the Monthly Review bore "sole sovereign sway and masterdom" over all literary productions. Though nothing can be said against the respectability or usefulness of that publication during its long and almost exclusive enjoyment of the public favor, yet the style of criticism adopted in it is such as to appear slight and unsatisfactory to a modern reader. The writers, instead of "outdoing termagant or out-Heroding Herod," were somewhat precise and prudish, gentle almost to a fault, full of candor and modesty,

"And of their port as meek as is a maid!"*

* A Mr. Rose and the Rev. Dr. Kippis were for many years its principal support. Mrs. Rose (I have heard my father say) contributed the Monthly Catalogue. There is sometimes a certain tartness and the woman's tongue in it. It is said of Gray's Elegy—"This little poem, however humble its pretensions, is not without elegance or merit." The characters of prophet and critic are not always united.

There was none of that Drawcansir work going on then that there is now; no scalping of authors, no hacking and hewing of their Lives and Opinions, except that they used those of Tristam Shandy, Gent., rather scurvily; which was to be expected. All, however, had a show of courtesy and good-manners. The satire was covert and artfully insinuated; the praise was short and sweet. We meet with no oracular theories; no profound analysis of principles; no unsparing exposure of the least discernible deviation from them. It was deemed sufficient to recommend the work in general terms, "This is an agreeable volume," or, "This is a work of great learning and research," to set forth the title and table of contents, and proceed without farther preface to some appropriate extracts, for the most part concurring in opinion with the author's text, but now and then interposing an objection to maintain appearances and assert the jurisdiction of the court. This cursory manner of hinting approbation or dissent would make but a lame figure at present. We must have not only an announcement that "this is an agreeable or able work," but we must have it explained at full length, and so as to silence all cavillers, in what the agreeableness or ability of the work consists: the author must be reduced to a class, all the living or defunct examples of which must be characteristically and pointedly *differenced* from one another; the value of this class of writing must be developed and ascertained in comparison with others; the principles of taste, the elements of our sensations, the structure of the human faculties, all must undergo a strict scrutiny and revision. The modern or metaphysical system of criticism, in short, supposes the question, *Why?* to be repeated at the end of every decision; and the answer gives birth to interminable arguments and discussion. The former laconic mode was well adapted to guide those who merely wanted to be informed of the character and subject of a work in order to read it: the present is more useful to those whose object is less to read the work than to dispute upon its merits, and go into company clad in the whole defensive and offensive armor of criticism.

Neither are we less removed at present from the dry and meagre mode of dissecting the skeletons of works, instead of transfusing their living principles, which prevailed in Dryden's

Prefaces,* and in the criticisms written on the model of the French school about a century ago. A genuine criticism should, as I take it, reflect the colors, the light and shade, the soul and body of a work:—here we have nothing but its superficial plan and elevation, as if a poem were a piece of formal architecture. We are told something of the plot or fable, of the moral, and of the observance or violation of the three unities of time, place, and action; and perhaps a word or two is added on the dignity of the persons or the baldness of the style: but we no more know, after reading one of these complacent *tirades*, what the essence of the work is, what passion has been touched, or how skilfully, what tone and movement the author's mind imparts to his subject or receives from it, than if we had been reading a homily or a gazette. That is, we are left quite in the dark as to the feelings of pleasure or pain to be derived from the genius of the performance or the manner in which it appeals to the imagination: we know to a nicety how it squares with the thread-bare rules of composition, not in the least how it affects the principles of taste. We know everything about the work, and nothing of it. The critic takes good care not to balk the reader's fancy by anticipating the effect which the author has aimed at producing. To be sure, the works so handled were often worthy of their commentators: they had the form of imagination without the life or power; and when any one had gone regularly through the number of acts into which they were divided, the measure in which they were written, or the story on which they were founded, there was little else to be said about them. It is curious to observe the effect which the Paradise Lost had on this class of critics, like throwing a tub to a whale: they could make nothing of it. "It was out of all plumb—not one of the angles at the four corners was a right angle!" They did not seek for, nor would they much relish the marrow of poetry it contained. Like polemics in religion, they had discarded the essentials of fine writing for the outward form and points of controversy. They

* There are some splendid exceptions to this censure. His comparison between Ovid and Virgil, and his character of Shakspeare, are masterpieces of their kind.

were at issue with Genius and Nature by what route and in what garb they should enter the Temple of the Muses. Accordingly we find that Dryden had no other way of satisfying himself of the pretensions of Milton in the epic style but by translating his anomalous work into rhyme and dramatic dialogue.*—So there are connoisseurs who give you the subject, the grouping, the perspective, and all the mechanical circumstances of a picture; but never say a word about the expression. The reason is, they see the former, but not the latter. There are persons, however, who cannot employ themselves better than in taking an inventory of works of art (they want a faculty for higher studies), as there are works of art, so called, which seem to have been composed expressly with an eye to such a class of connoisseurs. In them are to be found no recondite nameless beauties thrown away upon the stupid vulgar gaze; no "graces snatched beyond the reach of art;" nothing but what the merest pretender may note down in good set terms in his common-place book, just as it is before him. Place one of these half-informed, imperfectly organized spectators before a tall canvas with groups on groups of figures, of the size of life, and engaged in a complicated action, of which they know the name and all the particulars, and there are no bounds to their burst of involuntary enthusiasm. They mount on the stilts of the subject and ascend the highest Heaven of Invention, from whence they see sights and hear revelations which they communicate with all the fervor of plenary explanation to those who may be disposed to attend to their raptures. They float with wings expanded in lofty circles, they stalk over the canvas at large strides, never condescending to pause at any-

* We have critics in the present day who cannot tell what to make of the tragic writers of Queen Elizabeth's age (except Shakspeare, who passes by prescriptive right), and are extremely puzzled to reduce the efforts of their "great and irregular" power to the standard of their own slight and showy common-places. The truth is, they had better give up the attempt to reconcile such contradictions as an artificial taste and natural genius; and repose on the admiration of verses which derive their odor from the scent of rose-leaves inserted between the pages, and their polish from the smoothness of the paper on which they are printed. They, and such writers as Decker and Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Marlowe, move in different orbs of the human intellect, and need never jostle.

thing of less magnitude than a group or a colossal figure. The face forms no part of their collective inquiries; or so that it occupies only a sixth or an eighth proportion of the whole body, all is according to the received rules of composition. Point to a divine portrait of Titian, to an angelic head of Guido, close by—they see and heed it not. What are the "looks commercing with the skies," the soul speaking in the face, to them? It asks another and an inner sense to comprehend them; but for the trigonometry of painting, nature has constituted them indifferently well. They take a stand on the distinction between portrait and history, and there they are spell-bound. Tell them that there can be no fine history without portraiture, that the painter must proceed from that ground to the one above it, and that a hundred bad heads cannot make one good historical picture, and they will not believe you, though the thing is obvious to any gross capacity. Their ideas always fly to the circumference, and never fix at the centre. Art must be on a grand scale; according to them, the whole is greater than a part, and the greater necessarily implies the less. The outline is in this view of the matter the same thing as the filling-up, and "the limbs and flourishes of a discourse" the substance. Again, the same persons make an absolute distinction, without knowing why, between high and low subjects. Say that you would as soon have Murillo's *Two Beggar-Boys* at the Dulwich Gallery as almost any picture in the world, that is, that it would be one you would choose out of ten (had you the choice), and they reiterate upon you, that surely a low subject cannot be of equal value with a high one. It is in vain that you turn to the picture: they keep to the class. They have eyes, but see not; and upon their principles of refined taste, would be just as good judges of the merit of the picture without seeing it as with that supposed advantage. They know what the subject is *from the catalogue!*—Yet it is not true, as Lord Byron asserts, that execution is everything, and the class or subject nothing. The highest subjects, equally well-executed (which, however, rarely happens), are the best. But the power of execution, the manner of seeing nature, is one thing, and may be so superlative (if you are only able to judge of it) as to countervail every disadvantage of subject. Raphael's storks in the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, exulting

in the event, are finer than the head of Christ would have been in almost any other hands. The cant of criticism is on the other side of the question; because execution depends on various degrees of power in the artist, and a knowledge of it on various degrees of feeling and discrimination in you: but to commence artist or connoisseur in the grand style at once, without any distinction of qualifications whatever, it is only necessary for the first to choose his subject, and for the last to pin his faith on the sublimity of the performance, for both to look down with ineffable contempt on the painters and admirers of subjects of low life. I remember a young Scotchman once trying to prove to me that Mrs. Dickons was a superior singer to Miss Stephens, because the former excelled in sacred music, and the latter did not. At that rate, that is, if it is the singing sacred music that gives the preference, Miss Stephens would only have to sing sacred music to surpass herself and vie with her pretended rival; for this theory implies that all sacred music is equally good, and therefore better than any other. I grant that Madame Catalani's singing of sacred music is superior to Miss Stephens's ballad-strains, because her singing is better altogether, and an ocean of sound more wonderful than a simple stream of dulcet harmonies. In singing the last verse of "God save the King" not long ago, her voice towered above the whole confused noise of the orchestra, like an eagle piercing the clouds, and poured "such sweet thunder" through the ear. as excited equal astonishment and rapture!

Some kinds of criticism are as much too insipid as others are too pragmatical. It is not easy to combine point with solidity, spirit with moderation and candor. Many persons see nothing but beauties in a work, others nothing but defects. Those cloy you with sweets, and are "the very milk of human kindness," flowing on in a stream of luscious panegyrics; these take delight in poisoning the sources of your satisfaction, and putting you out of conceit with nearly every author that comes in their way. The first are frequently actuated by personal friendship, the last by all the virulence of party-spirit. Under the latter head would fall what may be termed *political criticism*. The basis of this style of writing is a *caput mortuum* of impotent spite and dulness,

till it is varnished over with the slime of servility, and thrown into a state of unnatural activity by the venom of the most rancorous bigotry. The eminent professors in this grovelling department are at first merely out of sorts with themselves, and vent their spleen in little interjections and contortions of phrase:—cry *Pish* at a lucky hit, and *Hem* at a fault, are smart on personal defects, and sneer at "Beauty out of favor and on crutches"—are thrown into an ague-fit by hearing the name of a rival, start back with horror at any approach to their morbid pretensions like Justice Woodcock with his gouty limbs—rifle the flowers of the Della Cruscan school, and give you in their stead, as models of pleasing pastoral style, Verses upon Anna—which you may see in the notes to the Baviad and Mæviad. All this is like the fable of the *Kitten and the Leaves*. But when they get their brass collar on and shake their bells of office, they set up their backs like the Great Cat Rodilardus, and pounce upon men and things. Wo to any little heedless reptile of an author that ventures across their path without a safe-conduct from the Board of Control. They snap him up at a mouthful, and sit licking their lips, stroking their whiskers, and rattling their bells over the imaginary fragments of their devoted prey, to the alarm and astonishment of the whole breed of literary, philosophical, and revolutionary vermin, that were naturalised in this country by a Prince of Orange and an Elector of Hanover a hundred years ago.* When one of these pampered, sleek, "demure-looking, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed, green-eyed" critics makes his King and Country parties to this sort of sport literary, you have not much chance of escaping out of his clutches in a whole skin. Treachery becomes a principle with them, and mischief a conscience, that is, a livelihood. They not only *damn* the work in the lump, but vilify and traduce the author, and substitute lying abuse and sheer malignity for sense and satire. To have written a popular work is as much as a man's character is worth, and sometimes his life, if he does not happen to be on the right side of the question. The way in which they set about *stultifying* an adversary

* The intelligent reader will be pleased to understand, that there is here a tacit allusion to Squire Western's significant phrase of *Hanover Rats*.

is not to accuse you of faults, or to exaggerate those which you may really have, but they deny that you have any merits at all, least of all those that the world have given you credit for; bless themselves from understanding a single sentence in a whole volume; and unless you are ready to subscribe to all their articles of peace, will not allow you to be qualified to write your own name. It is not a question of literary discussion, but of political proscription. It is a mark of loyalty and patriotism to extend no quarter to those of the opposite party. Instead of replying to your arguments, they call you names, put words and opinions into your mouth which you have never uttered, and consider it a species of misprision of treason to admit that a Whig author knows anything of common sense or English. The only chance of putting a stop to this unfair mode of dealing would perhaps be to make a few reprisals by way of example. The Court-party boast some writers who have a reputation to lose, and who would not like to have their names dragged through the kennel of dirty abuse and vulgar obloquy. What silenced the masked battery of Blackwood's Magazine was the implication of the name of Sir Walter Scott in some remarks upon it—(an honor of which it seems that extraordinary person was not ambitious)—to be "pilloried on infamy's high stage" was a distinction and an amusement to the other gentlemen concerned in that praiseworthy publication. I was complaining not long ago of this prostitution of literary criticism as peculiar to our own times, when I was told that it was just as bad in the time of Pope and Dryden, and indeed worse, inasmuch as we have no Popes or Drydens now on the obnoxious side to be nicknamed, metamorphosed into scarecrows, and impaled alive by bigots and dunces. I shall not pretend to say how far this remark may be true. The English (it must be owned) are rather a foul-mouthed nation.

Besides temporary or accidental biases of this kind, there seem to be sects and parties in taste and criticism (with a set of appropriate watchwords) coeval with the arts of composition, and that will last as long as the difference with which men's minds are originally constituted. There are some who are all for the elegance of an author's style, and some who are equally delighted with simplicity. The last refer you to Swift as a model of Eng

lish prose—thinking all other writers sophisticated and naught—the former prefer the more ornamented and sparkling periods of Junius or Gibbon. It is to no purpose to think of bringing about an understanding between these opposite factions. It is a natural difference of temperament and constitution of mind. The one will never relish the antithetical point and perpetual glitter of the artificial prose-style; as the plain unperverted English idiom will always appear trite and insipid to the others. A toleration, not an uniformity of opinion is as much as can be expected in this case: and both sides may acknowledge, without imputation on their taste or consistency, that these different writers excelled each in their way. I might remark here that the epithet *elegant* is very sparingly used in modern criticism. It has probably gone out of fashion with the appearance of the *Lake School*, who, I apprehend, have no such phrase in their vocabulary. Mr. Rogers was, I think, almost the last poet to whom it was applied as a characteristic compliment. At present it would be considered as a sort of diminutive of the title of poet, like the terms *pretty* or *fanciful*, and is banished from the *haut ton* of letters. It may perhaps come into request at some future period. Again, the dispute between the admirers of Homer and Virgil has never been settled, and never will: for there will always be minds to whom the excellences of Virgil will be more congenial, and therefore more objects of admiration than those of Homer, and *vice versâ*. Both are right in preferring what suits them best, the delicacy and selectness of the one, or the fulness and majestic flow of the other. There is the same difference in their tastes that there was in the genius of their two favorites. Neither can the disagreement between the French and English school of tragedy ever be reconciled, till the French become English, or the English French.* Both are right in what they admire, both are wrong in condemning the others for what they admire. We see the defects of Racine, they see the faults of Shakspeare probably in an exaggerated point of view. But we may be sure of this, that when we see nothing but grossness and barbarism, or insipidity and verbiage in a writer that is the God of a nation's idolatry, it

* Of the two the latter alternative is more likely to happen We abuse and imitate them. They laugh at but do not imitate us.

is we and not they who want true taste and feeling. The controversy about Pope and the opposite school in our own poetry comes to much the same thing. Pope's correctness, smoothness, &c., are very good things and much to be commended in him. But it is not to be expected or even desired that others should have these qualities in the same paramount degree, to the exclusion of everything else. If you like correctness and smoothness of all things in the world, there they are for you in Pope. If you like other things better, such as strength and sublimity, you know where to go for them. Why trouble Pope or any other author for what they have not, and do not profess to give? Those who seem to imply that Pope possessed, besides his own peculiar, exquisite merits, all that is to be found in Shakspeare or Milton, are I should hardly think in good earnest. But I do not therefore see that, because this was not the case, Pope was no poet. We cannot by a little verbal sophistry confound the qualities of different minds, nor force opposite excellences into a union by all the intolerance in the world. We may pull Pope in pieces as long as we please, for not being Shakspeare or Milton, as we may carp at them for not being Pope: but this will not make a poet equal to all three. If we have a taste for some one precise style or manner, we may keep it to ourselves and let others have theirs. If we are more catholic in our notions, and want variety of excellence and beauty, it is spread abroad for us to profusion in the variety of books and in the several growth of men's minds, fettered by no capricious or arbitrary rules. Those who would proscribe whatever falls short of a given standard of imaginary perfection, do so not from a higher capacity of taste or range of intellect than others, but to destroy, to "crib and cabin in," all enjoyments and opinions but their own.

We find people of a decided and original, and others of a more general and versatile taste. I have sometimes thought that the most acute and original-minded men made bad critics. They see everything too much through a particular medium. What does not fall in with their own bias and mode of composition, strikes them as common-place and factitious. What does not come into the direct line of their vision, they regard idly, with vacant, "lack-lustre eye." The extreme force of their original impres-

sions compared with the feebleness of those they receive at second hand from others, oversets the balance and just proportion of their minds. Men who have fewer native resources, and are obliged to apply oftener to the general stock, acquire by habit a greater aptitude in appreciating what they owe to others. Their taste is not made a sacrifice to their egotism and vanity, and they enrich the soil of their minds with continual accessions of borrowed strength and beauty. I might take this opportunity of observing, that the person of the most refined and least contracted taste I ever knew was the late Joseph Fawcett, the friend of my youth. He was almost the first literary acquaintance I ever made, and I think the most candid and unsophisticated. He had a masterly perception of all style and of every kind and degree of excellence, sublime or beautiful, from Milton's Paradise Lost to Shenstone's Pastoral Ballad, from Butler's Analogy down to Humphry Clinker. If you had a favorite author, he had read him too, and knew all the best morsels, the subtle *traits*, the capital touches. "Do you like Sterne?"—"Yes, to be sure," he would say, "I should deserve to be hanged, if I didn't!" His repeating some parts of Comus with his fine, deep, mellow-toned voice, particularly the lines, "I have heard my mother Circe with the Sirens three," &c.—and the enthusiastic comments he made afterwards, were a feast to the ear and to the soul. He read the poetry of Milton with the same fervor and spirit of devotion that I have since heard others read their own. "That is the most delicious feeling of all," I have heard him exclaim, "to like what is excellent, no matter whose it is." In this respect he practised what he preached. He was incapable of harboring a sinister motive, and judged only from what he felt. There was no flaw nor mist in the clear mirror of his mind. He was as open to impressions as he was strenuous in maintaining them. He did not care a rush whether a writer was old or new, in prose or in verse—"What he wanted," he said, "was something to make him think." Most men's minds are to me like musical instruments out of tune. Touch a particular key, and it jars and makes harsh discord with your own They like Gil Blas, but can see nothing to laugh at in Don Quixote: they adore Richardson, but are disgusted with Fielding. Fawcett had a taste accommodated to all these. He was not

exceptious. He gave a cordial welcome to all sorts, provided they were the best in their kind. He was not fond of counterfeits or duplicates. His own style was labored and artificial to a fault, while his character was frank and ingenuous in the extreme. He was not the only individual whom I have known to counteract their natural disposition in coming before the public, and by avoiding what they perhaps thought an inherent infirmity, debar themselves of their real strength and advantages. A heartier friend or honester critic I never coped withal. He has made me feel (by contrast) the want of genuine sincerity and generous sentiment in some that I have listened to since, and convinced me (if practical proof were wanting) of the truth of that text of Scripture—"That had I all knowledge and could speak with the tongues of angels, yet without charity I were nothing!" I would rather be a man of disinterested taste and liberal feeling, to see and acknowledge truth and beauty wherever I found it, than a man of greater and more original genius, to hate, envy, and deny all excellence but my own—but that poor scanty pittance of it (compared with the whole) which I had myself produced!

There is another race of critics who might be designated as the *Occult School—rerè adepti*. They discern no beauties but what are concealed from superficial eyes, and overlook all that are obvious to the vulgar part of mankind. Their art is the transmutation of styles. By happy alchemy of mind they convert dross into gold—and gold into tinsel. They see farther into a millstone than most others. If an author is utterly unreadable, they can read him for ever: his intricacies are their delight, his mysteries are their study. They prefer Sir Thomas Brown to the Rambler by Dr. Johnson, and Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy to all the writers of the Georgian Age. They judge of works of genius as misers do of hid treasure—it is of no value unless they have it all to themselves. They will no more share a book than a mistress with a friend. If they suspected their favorite volumes of delighting any eyes but their own, they would immediately discard them from the list. Theirs are superannuated beauties that every one else has left off intriguing with, bedridden hags, a "stud of night-mares." This is not envy or affectation, but a natural proneness to singularity, a love of what is

odd and out of the way. They must come at their pleasures with difficulty, and support admiration by an uneasy sense of ridicule and opposition. They despise those qualities in a work which are cheap and obvious. They like a monopoly of taste, and are shocked at the prostitution of intellect implied in popular productions. In like manner, they would choose a friend or recommend a mistress for gross defects; and tolerate the sweetness of an actress's voice only for the ugliness of her face. Pure pleasures are in their judgment cloying and insipid—

"An ounce of sour is worth a pound of sweet!"

Nothing goes down with them but what is *caviare* to the multitude. They are eaters of olives and readers of black-letter. Yet they smack of genius and would be worth any money, were it only for the rarity of the thing!

The last sort I shall mention are *verbal critics*—mere word-catchers, fellows that pick out a word in a sentence and a sentence in a volume, and tell you it is wrong.* These erudite persons constantly find out by anticipation that you are deficient in the smallest things—that you cannot spell certain words or join the nominative case and the verb together, because to do this is the height of their own ambition, and of course they must set you down lower than their opinion of themselves. They degrade by reducing you to their own standard of merit; for the qualifications they deny you, or the faults they object, are so very insignificant, that to prove yourself possessed of the one or free from the other, is to make yourself doubly ridiculous. Littleness is their element, and they give a character of meanness to whatever they touch. They creep, buzz, and fly-blow. It is much easier to crush than to catch these troublesome insects; and when they are in your power, your self-respect spares them. The race is almost extinct:—one or two of them are sometimes seen crawling over the pages of the Quarterly Review!

* The title of *Ultra-Crepidarian critics* has been given to a variety of this species

ESSAY XXVI.

On great and little things.

"These little things are great to little man."
GOLDSMITH.

THE great and the little have, no doubt, a real existence in the nature of things: but they both find pretty much the same level in the mind of man. It is a common measure which does not always accommodate itself to the size and importance of the objects it represents. It has a certain interest to spare for certain things (and no more) according to its humor and capacity; and neither likes to be stinted in its allowance, nor to muster up an unusual share of sympathy, just as the occasion may require. Perhaps if we could recollect distinctly, we should discover that the two things that have affected us most in the course of our lives have been, one of them the greatest, and the other of the smallest possible consequence. To let that pass as too fine a speculation, we know well enough that very trifling circumstances do give us great and daily annoyance, and as often prove too much for our philosophy and forbearance, as matters of the highest moment. A lump of soot spoiling a man's dinner, a plate of toast falling in the ashes, the being disappointed of a ribbon to a cap or a ticket for a ball, have led to serious and almost tragical consequences. Friends not unfrequently fall out and never meet again for some idle misunderstanding, "some trick not worth an egg," who have stood the shock of serious differences of opinion and clashing interests in life; and there is an excellent paper in the TATLER, to prove that if a married couple do not quarrel about some point in the first instance not worth contesting, they will seldom find an opportunity afterwards to quarrel about a question of real importance. Grave divines, great statesmen, and deep philosophers are put out of their way by very little

things: nay, discreet, worthy people, without any pretensions but to good-nature and common sense, readily surrender the happiness of their whole lives sooner than give up an opinion to which they have committed themselves, though in all likelihood it was the mere turn of a feather which side they should take in the argument. It is the being baulked or thwarted in anything that constitutes the grievance, the unpardonable affront, not the value of the thing to which we have made up our minds. Is it that we despise little things; that we are not prepared for them; that they take us in our careless, unguarded moments, and tease us out of our ordinary patience by their petty, incessant, insect warfare, buzzing about us and stinging us like gnats; so that we can neither get rid of nor grapple with them, whereas we collect all our fortitude and resolution to meet evils of greater magnitude? Or is it that there is a certain stream of irritability that is continually fretting upon the wheels of life, which finds sufficient food to play with in straws and feathers, while great objects are too much for it, either choke it up, or divert its course into serious and thoughtful interest? Some attempt might be made to explain this in the following manner.

One is always more vexed at losing a game of any sort by a single hole or ace, than if one has never had a chance of winning it. This is no doubt in part or chiefly because the prospect of success irritates the subsequent disappointment. But people have been known to pine and fall sick from holding the next number to the twenty thousand pound prize in the lottery. Now this could only arise from their being so near winning in fancy, from there seeming to be so thin a partition between them and success. When they were within one of the right number, why could they not have taken the next—it was so easy: this haunts their minds and will not let them rest, notwithstanding the absurdity of the reasoning. It is that the will here has a slight imaginary obstacle to surmount to attain its end; it should appear it had only an exceedingly trifling effort to make for this purpose, that it was absolutely in its power (had it known) to seize the envied prize, and it is continually harassing itself by making the obvious transition from one number to the other, when it is too late. That is to say, the will acts in proportion to its fancied

power, to its superiority over immediate obstacles. Now in little or indifferent matters there seems no reason why it should not have its own way, and therefore a disappointment vexes it the more. It grows angry according to the insignificance of the occasion, and frets itself to death about an object, merely because from its very futility there can be supposed to be no real difficulty in the way of its attainment, nor anything more required for this purpose than a determination of the will. The being baulked of this throws the mind off its balance, or puts it into what is called *a passion;* and as nothing but an act of voluntary power still seems necessary to get rid of every impediment, we indulge our violence more and more, and heighten our impatience by degrees into a sort of frenzy. The object is the same as it was, but we are no longer as we were. The blood is heated, the muscles are strained. The feelings are wound up to a pitch of agony with the vain strife. The temper is tried to the utmost it will bear. The more contemptible the object or the obstructions in the way to it, the more are we provoked at being hindered by them. It looks like witchcraft. We fancy there is a spell upon us, so that we are hampered by straws and entangled in cobwebs. We believe that there is a fatality about our affairs. It is evidently done on purpose to plague us. A demon is at our elbow to torment and defeat us in everything, even in the smallest things. We see him sitting and mocking us, and we rave and gnash our teeth at him in return. It is particularly hard that we cannot succeed in any one point, however trifling, that we set our hearts on. We are the sport of imbecility and mischance. We make another desperate effort, and fly out into all the extravagance of impotent rage once more. Our anger runs away with our reason, because, as there is little to give it birth, there is nothing to check it or recall us to our senses in the prospect of consequences. We take up and rend in pieces the mere toys of humor, as the gusts of wind take up and whirl about chaff and stubble. Passion plays the tyrant, in a grand tragic-comic style, over the Lilliputian difficulties and petty disappointments it has to encounter, gives way to all the fretfulness of grief and all the turbulence of resentment, makes a fuss about nothing because there is nothing to make a fuss about—when an impending calamity, an irretriev-

able loss, would instantly bring it to its recollection, and tame it in its preposterous career. A man may be in a great passion and give himself strange airs at so simple a thing as a game at ball, for instance; may rage like a wild beast, and be ready to dash his head against the wall about nothing, or about that which he will laugh at the next minute, and think no more of ten minutes after, at the same time that a good smart blow from the ball, the effects of which he might feel as a serious inconvenience for a month, would calm him directly—

> "Anon as patient as the female dove,
> His silence will sit drooping."

The truth is, we pamper little griefs into great ones, and bear great ones as well as we can. We can afford to dally and play tricks with the one, but the others we have enough to do with, without any of the wantonness and bombast of passion—without the swaggering of Pistol, or the insolence of King Cambyses' vein. To great evils we submit, we resent little provocations. I have before now been disappointed of a hundred pound job and lost half a crown at rackets on the same day, and been more mortified at the latter than the former. That which is lasting we share with the future, we defer the consideration of till to-morrow: that which belongs to the moment we drink up in all its bitterness, before the spirit evaporates. We probe minute mischiefs to the quick; we lacerate, tear, and mangle our bosoms with misfortune's finest, brittlest point, and wreak our vengeance on ourselves and it for good and all. Small pains are more manageable, more within our reach; we can fret and worry ourselves about them, can turn them into any shape, can twist and torture them how we please:—a grain of sand in the eye, a thorn in the flesh only irritates the part, and leaves us strength enough to quarrel and get out of all patience with it:—a heavy blow stuns and takes away all power of sense as well as of resistance. The great and mighty reverses of fortune, like the revolutions of nature, may be said to carry their own weight and reason along with them: they seem unavoidable and remediless, and we submit to them without murmuring as to a fatal necessity. The magnitude of the events, in which we may happen to be con-

cerned, fills the mind, and carries it out of itself, as it were, into the page of history. Our thoughts are expanded with the scene on which we have to act, and lend us strength to disregard our own personal share in it. Some men are indifferent to the stroke of fate, as before and after earthquakes there is a calm in the air. From the commanding situations whence they have been accustomed to view things, they look down at themselves as only a part of the whole, and can abstract their minds from the pressure of misfortune, by the aid of its very violence. They are projected, in the explosion of events, into a different sphere, far from their former thoughts, purposes, and passions. The greatness of the change anticipates the slow effects of time and reflection:—they at once contemplate themselves from an immense distance, and look up with speculative wonder at the height on which they stood. Had the downfall been less complete, it would have been more galling and borne with less resignation, because there might still be a chance of remedying it by farther efforts and farther endurance—but *past cure, past hope*. It is chiefly this cause (together with something of constitutional character) which has enabled the greatest man in modern history to bear his reverses of fortune with gay magnanimity, and to submit to the loss of the empire of the world with as little discomposure as if he had been playing a game at chess.* This does not prove by our theory that he did not use to fly into violent passions with Talleyrand for plaguing him with bad news when things went wrong. He was mad at uncertain forebodings of disaster, but resigned to its consummation. A man may dislike impertinence, yet have no quarrel with necessity!

There is another consideration that may take off our wonder at the firmness with which the principals in great vicissitudes of fortune bear their fate, which is, that they are in the secret of its operations, and know that what to others appears chance-medley was unavoidable. The clearness of their perception of all the circumstances converts the uneasiness of doubt into certainty: they have not the qualms of conscience which their admirers have, who cannot tell how much of the event is to be attributed

* This Essay was written in January, 1821.

to the leaders, and how much to unforeseen accidents: they are aware either that the result was not to be helped, or that they did all they could to prevent it.

——— "Si Pergama dextra
Defendi possent, etiam hac defensa fuissent."

It is the mist and obscurity through which we view objects that make us fancy they might have been, or might still be otherwise. The precise knowledge of antecedents and consequents makes men practical as well as philosophical Necessarians. It is the want of this knowledge which is the principle and soul of gambling, and of all games of chance or partial skill. The supposition is, that the issue is uncertain, and that there is no positive means of ascertaining it. It is dependent on the turn of a die, on the tossing up of a halfpenny: to be fair, it must be a lottery; there is no knowing but by the event; and it is this which keeps the interest alive, and works up the passion little short of madness. There is all the agitation of suspense, all the alternation of hope and fear, of good and bad success, all the eagerness of desire, without the possibility of reducing this to calculation, that is, of subjecting the increased action of the will to a known rule, or restraining the excesses of passion within the bounds of reason. We see no cause beforehand why the run of the cards should not be in our favor:—we will hear of none afterwards why it should not have been so. As in the absence of all *data* to judge by, we wantonly fill up the blank with the most extravagant expectations, so, when all is over, we obstinately recur to the chance we had previously. There is nothing to tame us down to the event, nothing to reconcile us to our hard luck, for so we think it. We see no reason why we failed (and there was none, any more than why we should succeed)—we think that, reason apart, our will is the next best thing; we still try to have it our own way, and fret, torment, and harrow ourselves up with vain imaginations to effect impossibilities.* We play the game over again: we won-

* Losing gamesters thus become desperate, because the continued and violent irritation of the will against a run of ill-luck drives it to extremity, and makes it bid defiance to common sense and every consideration of prudence or self-interest

der how it was possible for us to fail. We turn our brain with straining at contradictions, and striving to make things what they are not, or in other words, to subject the course of nature to our fantastical wishes. "*If it had been so—if we had done such and such a thing*"—we try it in a thousand different ways, and are just as far off the mark as ever. We appealed to chance in the first instance, and yet, when it has decided against us, we will not give in, and sit down contented with our loss, but refuse to submit to anything but reason, which has nothing to do with the matter. In drawing two straws, for example, to see which is the longest, there was no apparent necessity we should fix upon the wrong one, it was so easy to have fixed upon the other, nay, at one time we were going to do it—if we had—the mind thus runs back to what was so possible and feasible at one time, while the thing was pending, and would fain give a bias to causes so slender and insignificant, as the skittle-player bends his body to give a bias to the bowl he has already delivered from his hand, not considering that what is once determined, be the causes ever so trivial or evanescent, is in the individual instance unalterable. Indeed, to be a great philosopher, in the practical and most important sense of the term, little more seems necessary than to be convinced of the truth of the maxim, which the wise man repeated to the daughter of King Cophetna, *That if a thing is, it is*, and there is an end of it!

We often make life unhappy in wishing things to have turned out otherwise than they did, merely because that is possible to the imagination which is impossible in fact. I remember when Lamb's farce was damned (for damned it was, that's certain) I used to dream every night for a month after (and then I vowed I would plague myself no more about it) that it was revived at one of the Minor or provincial theatres with great success, that such and such retrenchments and alterations had been made in it, and that it was thought *it might do at the other House*. I had heard indeed (this was told in confidence to Lamb) that *Gentleman* Lewis was present on the night of its performance, and said, that if he had had it, he would have made it, by a few judicious curtailments, "the most popular little thing that had been brought out for some time." How often did I conjure up in recollection

the full diapason of applause at the end of the *Prologue*, and hear my ingenious friend in the first row of the pit roar with laughter at his own wit! Then I dwelt with forced complacency on some part in which it had been doing well: then we would consider (in concert) whether the long, tedious opera of the *Travellers*, which preceded it, had not tired people beforehand, so that they had not spirits left for the quaint and sparkling "wit skirmishes" of the dialogue, and we all agreed it might have gone down after a Tragedy, except Lamb himself, who swore he had no hopes of it from the beginning, and that he knew the name of the hero when it came to be discovered could not be got over. Mr. H——, thou wert damned! Bright shone the morning on the play-bills that announced thy appearance, and the streets were filled with the buzz of persons asking one another if they would go to see Mr. H——, and answering that they would certainly: but before night the gaiety, not of the author, but of his friends and the town was eclipsed, for thou wert damned! Hadst thou been anonymous, thou haply mightst have lived. But thou didst come to an untimely end for thy tricks, and for want of a better name to pass them off!

In this manner we go back to the critical minutes on which the turn of our fate, or that of any one else in whom we are interested, depended; try them over again with new knowledge and sharpened sensibility; and thus think to alter what is irrevocable, and ease for a moment the pang of lasting regret. So in a game at rackets* (to compare small things with great) I think if at such a point I had followed up my success, if I had not been too secure or over-anxious in another part, if I had played for such an opening, in short, if I had done anything but what I did and what has proved unfortunate in the result, the chances were all in my favor. But it is merely because I do not know what would have happened in the other case, that I interpret it so readily to my own advantage. I have sometimes lain awake a whole night, trying to serve out the last ball of an interesting game in a particular

* Some of the poets in the beginning of the last century would often set out on a simile by observing—"So in Arabia have I seen a Phœnix!" I confess my illustrations are of a more homely and humble nature

corner of the court, which I had missed from a nervous feeling. Rackets (I might observe for the sake of the uninformed reader) is, like any other athletic game, very much a thing of skill and practice; but it is also a thing of opinion, "subject to all the skyey influences." If you think you can win, you can win. Faith is necessary to victory. If you hesitate in striking at the ball, it is ten to one but you miss it. If you are apprehensive of committing some particular error (such as striking the ball *foul*) you will be nearly sure to do it. While thinking of that which you are so earnestly bent upon avoiding, your hand mechanically follows the strongest idea, and obeys the imagination rather than the intention of the striker. A run of luck is a forerunner of success, and courage is as much wanted as skill. No one is, however, free from nervous sensations at times. A good player may not be able to strike a single stroke if another comes into the court that he has a particular dread of; and it frequently so happens that a player cannot beat another even, though he can give half the game to an equal player, because he has some associations of jealousy or personal pique against the first which he has not towards the last. *Sed hæc hactenus.* Chess is a game I do not understand, and have not comprehension enough to play at. But I believe, though it is so much less a thing of chance than science or skill, eager players pass whole nights in marching and counter-marching their men and check-mating a successful adversary, supposing that at a certain point of the game, they had determined upon making a particular move instead of the one which they actually did make. I have heard a story of two persons playing at backgammon, one of whom was so enraged at losing his match at a particular point of the game, that he took the board and threw it out of the window. It fell upon the head of one of the passengers in the street, who came up to demand instant satisfaction for the affront and injury he had sustained. The losing gamester only asked him if he understood backgammon, and finding that he did, said, that if upon seeing the state of the game he did not excuse the extravagance of his conduct, he would give him any other satisfaction he wished for. The tables were accordingly brought, and the situation of the two contending parties being explained, the gentleman put up his

sword, and went away perfectly satisfied.—To return from this, which to some will seem a digression, and to others will serve as a confirmation of the doctrine I am insisting on.

It is not then the value of the object, but the time and pains bestowed upon it, that determines the sense and degree of our loss. Many men set their minds only on trifles, and have not a compass of soul to take an interest in anything truly great and important beyond forms and *minutiæ*. Such persons are really men of little minds, or may be complimented with the title of great children,

> "Pleased with a feather, tickled with a straw."

Larger objects elude their grasp, while they fasten eagerly on the light and insignificant. They fidget themselves and others to death with incessant anxiety about nothing. A part of their dress that is awry keeps them in a fever of restlessness and impatience; they sit picking their teeth, or paring their nails, or stirring the fire, or brushing a speck of dirt off their coats, while the house or the world tumbling about their ears would not rouse them from their morbid insensibility. They cannot sit still on their chairs for their lives, though, if there were anything for them to do, they would become immoveable. Their nerves are as irritable as their imaginations are callous and inert. They are addicted to an inveterate habit of littleness and perversity, which rejects every other motive to action or object of contemplation but the daily, teazing, contemptible, familiar, favorite sources of uneasiness and dissatisfaction. When they are of a sanguine instead of a morbid temperament, they become *quidnuncs* and virtuosos —collectors of caterpillars and odd volumes, makers of fishing-rods and curious in watch-chains. Will Wimble dabbled in this way, to his immortal honor. But many others have been less successful. There are those who build their fame on epigrams or epitaphs, and others who devote their lives to writing the Lord's Prayer in little. Some poets compose and sing their own verses. Which character would they have us think most highly of—the poet or the musician? The Great is One. Some there are who feel more pride in sealing a letter with a head of Homer than ever

that old blind bard did in reciting his Iliad. These raise a huge opinion of themselves out of nothing, as there are those who shrink from their own merits into the shade of unconquerable humility. I know one person at least, who would rather be the author of an unsuccessful farce than of a successful tragedy. Repeated mortification has produced an inverted ambition in his mind, and made failure the bitter test of desert. He cannot lift his drooping head to gaze on the gaudy crown of popularity placed within his reach, but casts a pensive, riveted look downwards to the modest flowers which the multitude trample under their feet. If he had a piece likely to succeed, coming out under all advantages, he would damn it by some ill-timed, wilful jest, and lose the favor of the public, to preserve the sense of his personal identity. "Misfortune," Shakspeare says, "brings a man acquainted with strange bed-fellows:" and it makes our thoughts traitors to ourselves.—It is a maxim with many—"*Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.*" Those only put it in practice successfully who think more of the pence than of the pounds. To such, a large sum is less than a small one. Great speculations, great returns are to them extravagant or imaginary: a few hundreds a year are something *snug* and comfortable. Persons who have been used to a petty, huckstering way of life, cannot enlarge their apprehensions to a notion of anything better. Instead of launching out into greater expense and liberality with the tide of fortune, they draw back with the fear of consequences, and think to succeed on a broader scale by dint of meanness and parsimony. My uncle Toby frequently caught Trim standing up behind his chair, when he had told him to be seated. What the corporal did out of respect, others would do out of servility. The medial character does not wear out in three or four generations. You cannot keep some people out of the kitchen, merely because their grandfathers or grandmothers came out of it. A poor man and his wife walking along in the neighborhood of Portland-place, he said to her peevishly, "What is the use of walking along these fine streets and squares? Let us turn down some alley!" He felt he should be more at home there. L—— said of an old acquaintance of his, that when he was young, he wanted to be a tailor, but had not spirit! This is

the misery of unequal matches. The woman cannot easily forget, or think that others forget, her origin; and with perhaps superior sense and beauty, keeps painfully in the back-ground. It is worse when she braves this conscious feeling, and displays all the insolence of the upstart and affected fine lady. But shouldst thou ever, my Infelice, grace my home with thy loved presence, as thou hast cheered my hopes with thy smile, thou wilt conquer all hearts with thy prevailing gentleness, and I will show the world what Shakspeare's women were!—Some gallants set their hearts on princesses; others descend in imagination to women of quality; others are mad after opera-singers. For my part, I am shy even of actresses, and should not think of leaving my card with Madame V——. I am for none of these *bonnes fortunes;* but for a list of humble beauties, servant-maids and shepherd-girls, with their red-elbows, hard hands, black stockings, and mob-caps, I could furnish out a gallery equal to Cowley's, and paint them half as well. Oh! might I but attempt a description of some of them in poetic prose, Don Juan would forget his Julia, and Mr. Davison might both print and publish this volume. I agree so far with Horace, and differ with Montaigne. I admire the Clementinas and Clarissas at a distance; the Pamelas and Fannys of Richardson and Fielding make my blood tingle. I have written love-letters to such in my time, *d'un pathetique à faire fendre les rochers*, and with about as much effect as if they had been addressed to stone. The simpletons only laughed, and said, that "those were not the sort of things to gain the affections." I wish I had kept copies in my own justification. What is worse, I have an utter aversion to *blue-stockings*. I do not care a fig for any woman that knows even what *an author* means. If I know that she has read anything I have written, I cut her acquaintance immediately. This sort of literary intercourse with me passes for nothing. Her critical and scientific acquirements are *carrying coals to Newcastle*. I do not want to be told that I have published such or such a work. I knew all this before. It makes no addition to my sense of power. I do not wish the affair to be brought about in that way. I would have her read my soul: she should understand the language of the heart: she should know what I am, as if she were another self! She should

love me for myself alone. I like myself without any reason!—I would have her do so too. This is not very reasonable. I abstract from my temptations to admire all the circumstances of dress, birth, breeding, fortune; and I would not willingly put forward my own pretensions, whatever they may be. The image of some fair creature is engraven on my inmost soul; it is on that I build my claim to her regard, and expect her to see into my heart, as I see her form always before me. Wherever she treads, pale primroses, like her face, vernal hyacinths, like her brow, spring up beneath her feet, and music hangs on every bough: but all is cold, barren, and desolate without her. Thus I feel and thus I think. But have I ever told her so? No. Or if I did, would she understand it? No. "I hunt the wind, I worship a statue, cry aloud to the desert." To see beauty is not to be beautiful, to pine in love is not to be loved again.—I always was inclined to raise and magnify the power of Love. I thought that his sweet power should only be exerted to join together the loveliest forms and fondest hearts; that none but those in whom his Godhead shone outwardly, and was inly felt, should ever partake of his triumphs: and I stood and gazed at a distance, as unworthy to mingle in so bright a throng, and did not (even for a moment) wish to tarnish the glory of so fair a vision by being myself admitted into it. I say this was my notion once, but God knows it was one of the errors of my youth. For coming nearer to look, I saw the maimed, the blind, and the halt enter in, the crooked, and the dwarf, the ugly, the old and impotent, the man of pleasure, and the man of the world, the dapper and the pert, the vain and shallow boaster, the fool and the pedant, the ignorant and brutal, and all that is farthest removed from earth's fairest-born, and the pride of human life. Seeing all these enter the courts of Love, and thinking that I also might venture in under favor of the crowd, but finding myself rejected, I fancied (I might be wrong) that it was not so much because I was below, as above the common standard. I did feel, but I was ashamed to feel, mortified at my repulse, when I saw the meanest of mankind, the very scum and refuse, all creeping things and every obscene creature, enter in before me. I seemed a species by myself. I took a pride even in my disgrace: and concluded I had elsewhere

my inheritance! The only thing I ever piqued myself upon was the writing the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*—a work that no woman ever read, or would ever comprehend the meaning of. But if I do not build my claim to regard on the pretensions I have, how can I build it on those I am totally without? Or why do I complain and expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Thought has in me cancelled pleasure; and this dark forehead, bent upon truth, is the rock on which all affection has split. And thus I waste my life in one long sigh; nor ever (till too late) beheld a gentle face turned gently upon mine!..... But no! not too late, if that face, pure, modest, downcast, tender, with angel sweetness, not only gladdens the prospect of the future, but sheds its radiance on the past, smiling in tears. A purple light hovers round my head. The air of love is in the room. As I look at my long-neglected copy of the Death of Clorinda, golden gleams play upon the canvas, as they used when I painted it. The flowers of Hope and Joy springing up in my mind, recal the time when they first bloomed there. The years that are fled knock at the door and enter. I am in the Louvre once more. The sun of Austerlitz has not set. It still shines here—in my heart; and he, the son of glory, is not dead, nor ever shall, to me. I am as when my life began. The rainbow is in the sky again. I see the skirts of the departed years. All that I have thought and felt has not been in vain. I am not utterly worthless, unregarded; nor shall I die and wither of pure scorn. Now could I sit on the tomb of Liberty, and write a Hymn to Love. Oh! if I am deceived, let me be deceived still. Let me live in the Elysium of those soft looks; poison me with kisses, kill me with smiles; but still mock me with thy love! *

Poets choose mistresses who have the fewest charms, that they may make something out of nothing. They succeed best in fiction, and they apply this rule to love. They make a Goddess of any dowdy. As Don Quixote said, in answer to the matter of

* I beg the reader to consider this passage merely as a specimen of the mock-heroic style, and as having nothing to do with any real facts or feelings.

fact remonstrances of Sancho, that Dulcinea del Toboso answered the purpose of signalising his valor just as well as the "fairest princess under sky," so any of the fair sex will serve them to write about just as well as another. They take some awkward thing and dress her up in fine words, as children dress up a wooden doll in fine clothes. Perhaps, a fine head of hair, a taper waist, or some other circumstance strikes them, and they make the rest out according to their fancies. They have a wonderful knack of supplying deficiencies in the subjects of their idolatry out of the store-house of their imaginations. They presently translate their favorites to the skies, where they figure with Berenice's locks and Ariadne's crown. This predilection for the unprepossessing and insignificant, I take to arise not merely from a desire in poets to have some subject to exercise their inventive talents upon, but from their jealousy of any pretensions (even those of beauty in the other sex) that might interfere with the continual incense offered to their personal vanity.

Cardinal Mazarine never thought anything of Cardinal de Retz, after he told him that he had written for the last thirty years of his life with the same pen. Some Italian poet going to present a copy of verses to the Pope, and finding, as he was looking them over in the coach as he went, a mistake of a single letter in the printing, broke his heart of vexation and chagrin. A still more remarkable case of literary disappointment occurs in the history of a countryman of his, which I cannot refrain from giving here, as I find it related. "Anthony Codrus Urceus, a most learned and unfortunate Italian, born near Modena, 1446, was a striking instance," says his biographer, "of the miseries men bring upon themselves by setting their affections unreasonably on trifles. This learned man lived at Forli, and had an apartment in the palace. His room was so very dark, that he was forced to use a candle in the day-time; and one day, going abroad without putting it out, his library was set on fire, and some papers which he had prepared for the press were burned. The instant he was informed of this ill news, he was affected even to madness. He ran furiously to the palace, and stopping at the door of his apartment, he cried aloud, 'Christ Jesus! what mighty crime have I committed! whom of your followers have I ever injured, that you thus rage

with inexpiable hatred against me! Then turning himself to an image of the Virgin Mary near at hand, 'Virgin (says he) hear what I have to say, for I speak in earnest, and with a composed spirit: if I shall happen to address you in my dying moments, I humbly intreat you not to hear me, nor receive me into Heaven, for I am determined to spend all eternity in Hell!' Those who heard these blasphemous expressions, endeavored to comfort him; but all to no purpose; for, the society of mankind being no longer supportable to him, he left the city, and retired, like a savage, to the deep solitude of a wood. Some say that he was murdered there by ruffians: others, that he died at Bologna in 1500, after much contrition and penitence."

Perhaps the censure passed at the outset of the anecdote on this unfortunate person is unfounded and severe, when it is said that he brought his miseries on himself "by having set his affections unreasonably on trifles." To others it might appear so: but to himself the labor of a whole life was hardly a trifle. His passion was not a causeless one, though carried to such frantic excess The story of Sir Isaac Newton presents a strong contrast to the last-mentioned one, who on going into his study and finding that his dog Tray had thrown down a candle on the table, and burnt some papers of great value, contented himself with exclaiming, "Ah! Tray, you don't know the mischief you have done!" Many persons would not forgive the overturning a cup of chocolate so soon.

I remember hearing an instance some years ago of a man of character and property, who through unexpected losses had been condemned to a long and heart-breaking imprisonment, which he bore with exemplary fortitude. At the end of four years, by the interest and exertions of friends, he obtained his discharge with every prospect of beginning the world afresh, and had made his arrangements for leaving his irksome abode, and meeting his wife and family at a distance of two hundred miles by a certain day. Owing to the miscarriage of a letter, some signature necessary to the completion of the business did not arrive in time, and on account of the informality which had thus arisen, he could not set out home till the return of the post, which was four days longer. His spirit could not brook the delay. He had wound himself up

to the last pitch of expectation ; he had, as it were, calculated his patience to hold out to a certain point, and then to throw down his load for ever, and he could not find resolution to resume it for a few hours beyond this. He put an end to the intolerable conflict of hope and disappointment in a fit of excruciating anguish. Woes that we have time to foresee and leisure to contemplate, break their force by being spread over a larger surface, and borne at intervals ; but those that come upon us suddenly, for however short a time, seem to insult us by their unnecessary and uncalled-for intrusion ; and the very prospect of relief, when held out and then withdrawn from us, to however small a distance, only frets impatience into agony by tantalising our hopes and wishes ; and to rend asunder the thin partition that separates us from our favorite object, we are ready to burst even the fetters of life itself!

I am not aware that any one has demonstrated how it is that a stronger capacity is required for the conduct of great affairs than of small ones. The organs of the mind, like the pupil of the eye, may be contracted or dilated to view a broader or a narrower surface, and yet find sufficient variety to occupy its attention in each. The material universe is infinitely divisible, and so is the texture of human affairs. We take things in the gross or in the detail, according to the occasion. I think I could as soon get up the budget of Ways and Means for the current year, as be sure of making both ends meet, and paying my rent at quarter-day in a paltry huckster's shop. Great objects move on by their own weight and impulse : great power turns aside petty obstacles ; and he, who wields it, is often but the puppet of circumstances, like the fly on the wheel that said, "What a dust we raise!" It is easier to ruin a kingdom and aggrandize one's own pride and prejudices than to set up a green-grocer's stall. An idiot or a madman may do this at any time, whose word is law, and whose nod is fate. Nay, he whose look is obedience, and who understands the silent wishes of the great, may easily trample on the necks and tread out the liberties of a mighty nation, deriding their strength, and hating it the more from a consciousness of his own meanness. Power is not wisdom, it is true ; but it equally ensures its own objects. It does not exact, but dispenses with talent.

When a man creates this power, or new-moulds the state by sage counsels and bold enterprises, it is a different thing from overturning it with the levers that are put into his baby hands. In general, however, it may be argued that great transactions and complicated concerns ask more genius to conduct them than smaller ones, for this reason, *viz.* that the mind must be able either to embrace a greater variety of details in a more extensive range of objects, or must have a greater faculty of generalising, or a greater depth of insight into ruling principles, and so come at true results in that way. Bonaparte knew everything, even to the names of our cadets in the East-India service; but he failed in this, that he did not calculate the resistance which barbarism makes to refinement. He thought that the Russians could not burn Moscow, because the Parisians could not burn Paris. The French think everything must be French. The Cossacks, alas! do not conform to etiquette: the rudeness of the seasons knows no rules of politeness!—Some artists think it a test of genius to paint a large picture, and I grant the truth of this position, if the large picture contains more than a small one. It is not the size of the canvas, but the quantity of truth and nature put into it, that settles the point. It is a mistake, common enough on this subject, to suppose that a miniature is more finished than an oil-picture. The miniature is inferior to the oil-picture only because it is less finished, because it cannot follow nature into so many individual and exact particulars. The proof of which is, that the copy of a good portrait will always make a highly finished miniature (see for example Mr Bone's enamels), whereas the copy of a good miniature, if enlarged to the size of life, will make but a very sorry portrait. Several of our best artists, who are fond of painting large figures, invert this reasoning. They make the whole figure gigantic, not that they may have room for nature, but for the motion of their brush (as if they were painting the side of a house), regarding the extent of canvas they have to cover as an excuse for their slovenly and hasty manner of getting over it; and thus, in fact, leave their pictures nothing at last but overgrown miniatures, but huge caricatures. It is not necessary in any case (either in a larger or a smaller compass) to go into the details, so as to lose sight of the effect, and decompound the face

into porous and transparent molecules, in the manner of Denner, who painted what he saw through a magnifying glass. The painter's eye need not be a microscope, but I contend that it should be a looking-glass, bright, clear, lucid. The *little* in art begins with insignificant parts, with what does not tell in connection with other parts. The true artist will paint not material points, but *moral quantities*. In a word, wherever there is feeling or expression in a muscle or a vein, there is grandeur and refinement too. I will conclude these remarks with an account of the manner in which the ancient sculptors combined great and little things in such matters. "That the name of Phidias," says Pliny, "is illustrious among all the nations that have heard of the fame of the Olympian Jupiter, no one doubts; but in order that those may know that he is deservedly praised who have not even seen his works, we shall offer a few arguments, and those of his genius only: nor to this purpose shall we insist on the beauty of the Olympian Jupiter, nor on the magnitude of the Minerva at Athens, though it is twenty-six cubits in height (about thirty-five feet), and is made of ivory and gold: but we shall refer to the shield, on which the battle of the Amazons is carved on the outer side: on the inside of the same is the fight of the Gods and Giants; and on the sandals, that between the Centaurs and Lapithæ; so well did every part of that work display the powers of the Art. Again, the sculptures on the pedestal he called the birth of Pandora: there are to be seen in number thirty Gods, the figure of Victory being particularly admirable: the learned also admire the figures of the serpent and the brazen sphinx, writhing under the spear. These things are mentioned, in passing, of an artist never enough to be commended, that it may be seen that he showed the same magnificence even in small things."—*Pliny's Natural History*, Book 36.

ESSAY XXVII.

On Familiar Style.

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combination we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style, is to write as any one would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or to give another illustration, to write naturally is the same thing in regard to common conversation, as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume indeed the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation: neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts: but to write or speak with

propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick out the very one, the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style is, that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric:" —words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words, and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue.* How simple is it to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely, it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word, if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shown in adhering to those which are perfectly common, and yet never falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable, or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases.—To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife*, or *To cut a piece of wood*, is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common: but to *cut an acquaintance* is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly

* I have heard of such a thing as an author, who makes it a rule never to admit a monosyllable into his vapid verse. Yet the charm and sweetness of Marlow's lines depended often on their being made up almost entirely of monosyllables.

yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly therefore use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a license of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*. All provincial or bye-phrases come under the same mark of reprobation—all such as the writer transfers to the page from his fire-side or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use or convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value. I am fastidious in this respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. I never invented or gave a new and unauthorized meaning to any word but one single one (the term *impersonal* applied to feelings), and that was in an abstruse metaphysical discussion to express a very difficult distinction. I have been (I know) loudly accused of revelling in vulgarisms and broken English. I cannot speak to that point: but so far I plead guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idioms and common elliptical expressions. I am not sure that the critics in question know the one from the other, that is, can distinguish any medium between formal pedantry and the most barbarous solecism. As an author, I endeavor to employ plain words and popular modes of construction, as were I a chapman and dealer, I should common weights and measures.

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced, may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea that clenches a writer's meaning:—as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the arch; or as the pegs and nails are as necessary to the support of the building as the larger timbers, and more so than the mere showy, unsubstantial ornaments. I hate anything that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without anything in them. A person who does not deliberately dispose of all his thoughts alike in cumbrous draperies and flimsy dis-

guises, may strike out twenty varieties of familiar every-day language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not hit upon that particular and only one, which may be said to be identical with the exact impression in his mind. This would seem to show that Mr. Cobbett is hardly right in saying that the first word that occurs is always the best. It may be a very good one; and yet a better may present itself on reflection or from time to time. It should be suggested naturally, however, and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject. We seldom succeed by trying at improvement, or by merely substituting one word for another that we are not satisfied with, as we cannot recollect the name of a place or person by merely plaguing ourselves about it. We wander farther from the point by persisting in the wrong scent; but it starts up accidentally in the memory when we least expect it, by touching some link in the chain of previous association.

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display of nothing but rich and rare phraseology; ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight. They are very curious to inspect; but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss; but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for keep than wear*. I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or the end of the last century; but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that time. Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned, or mean and ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside. Mr. Lamb is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style of dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual, as to require their point and pungency to be neutralized by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the

prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton, Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Brown, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not however know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still I do not presume, amidst such excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*, which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression—

"A well of native English undefiled."

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these Essays of the ingenious and highly gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish that Erasmus's Colloquies or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas, as it is to spread a palette of showy colors, or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?"—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—"*Nothing*," it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*, rival the *tulipomania*. *Rouge* high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and vigor; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have

dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*—the most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare patch-work set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticise actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound, float before their morbid sense, which they paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini beings—

"That strut and fret their hour upon the stage"—

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses—

"And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed."

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images—a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a foot-stool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of tones and hues which "nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda's mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are in fact besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering, but empty and sterile phantoms of things. Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, the figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an

anchor, make up their stock in trade. They may be considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important merely in themselves, without any ground-work of feeling—there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of consequences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a mystery to them; they have no faculty that strikes a chord in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance. Pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice everything, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural, they are the slaves of vulgar affectation—of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent anything, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true: but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched, dear-bought, artificial, oriental in subject and allusion: all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader, by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations: they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression, and bathos in sentiment. They tantalize the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's palace of ice, "as worthless as in show 'twas glittering"—

"It smiled, and it was cold!"

ESSAY XXVIII.

On Effeminacy of Character.

Effeminacy of character arises from a prevalence of the sensibility over the will; or it consists in a want of fortitude to bear pain or to undergo fatigue, however urgent the occasion. We meet with instances of people who cannot lift up a little finger to save themselves from ruin, nor give up the smallest indulgence for the sake of any other person. They cannot put themselves out of their way on any account. No one makes a greater outcry when the day of reckoning comes, or affects greater compassion for the mischiefs they have occasioned; but till the time comes, they feel nothing, they care for nothing. They live in the present moment, are the creatures of the present impulse (whatever it may be)—and beyond that, the universe is nothing to them. The slightest toy countervails the empire of the world; they will not forego the smallest inclination they feel, for any object that can be proposed to them, or any reason that can be urged for it. You might as well ask of the gossamer not to wanton in the idle summer air, or of the moth not to play with the flame that scorches it, as ask of these persons to put off any enjoyment for a single instant, or to gird themselves up to any enterprise of pith or moment. They have been so used to a studied succession of agreeable sensations, that the shortest pause is a privation which they can by no means endure—it is like tearing them from their very existence—they have been so inured to ease and indolence, that the most trifling effort is like one of the tasks of Hercules, a thing of impossibility, at which they shudder. They lie on beds of roses, and spread their gauze wings to the sun and summer gale, and cannot bear to put their tender feet to the ground, much less to encounter the thorns and briers of the world. Life for them

——"rolls o'er Elysian flowers its amber stream"—

and they have no fancy for fishing in troubled waters. The ordinary state of existence they regard as something importunate and vain, and out of nature. What must they think of its trials and sharp vicissitudes? Instead of voluntarily embracing pain, or labor, or danger, or death, every sensation must be wound up to the highest pitch of voluptuous refinement, every motion must be grace and elegance; they live in a luxurious, endless dream, or

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain!"

Siren sounds must float around them; smiling forms must everywhere meet their sight; they must tread a soft measure on painted carpets or smooth-shaven lawns; books, arts, jests, laughter, occupy every thought and hour—what have they to do with the drudgery, the struggles, the poverty, the disease or anguish, which are the common lot of humanity! These things are intolerable to them, even in imagination. They disturb the enchantment in which they are lapt. They cause a wrinkle in the clear and polished surface of their existence. They exclaim with impatience and in agony, "Oh, leave me to my repose!" How "they shall discourse the freezing hours away, when wind and rain beat dark December down," or "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm," gives them no concern, it never once enters their heads. They close the shutters, draw the curtains, and enjoy or shut out the whistling of the approaching tempest. "They take no thought for the morrow," not they. They do not anticipate evils. Let them come when they will come, they will not run to meet them. Nay more, they will not move one step to prevent them, nor let any one else. The mention of such things is shocking; the very supposition is a nuisance that must not be tolerated. The idea of the trouble, the precautions, the negotiations necessary to obviate disagreeable consequences oppresses them to death, as an exertion too great for their enervated imaginations. They are not like Master Barnardine in Measure for Measure, who would not "get up to be hanged"—they would not get up to avoid being hanged. They are completely wrapped up in themselves; but then all their self-love is concentrated in the present minute. They have worked up their effeminate and fastidious appetite of enjoyment to such a pitch, that the whole of their

existence, every moment of it, must be made up of these exquisite indulgences; or they will fling it all away, with indifference and scorn. They stake their entire welfare on the gratification of the passing instant. Their senses, their vanity, their thoughtless gaiety have been pampered till they ache at the smallest suspension of their perpetual dose of excitement, and they will purchase the hollow happiness of the next five minutes, by a mortgage on the independence and comfort of years. They must have their will in everything, or they grow sullen and peevish like spoiled children. Whatever they set their eyes on, or make up their minds to, they must have that instant. They may pay for it hereafter. But that is no matter. They snatch a joy beyond the reach of fate, and consider the present time sacred, inviolable, unaccountable to that hard, churlish, niggard, inexorable taskmaster, the future. *Now or never* is their motto. They are madly devoted to the play-thing, the ruling passion of the moment. What is to happen to them a week hence is as if it were to happen to them a thousand years hence. They put off the consideration for another day, and their heedless unconcern laughs at it as a fable. Their life is "a cell of ignorance, travelling a-bed;" their existence is ephemeral; their thoughts are insect-winged, their identity expires with the whim, the folly, the passion of the hour.

Nothing but a miracle can rouse such people from their lethargy. It is not to be expected, nor is it even possible in the natural course of things. Pope's striking exclamation,

> "Oh! blindness to the future kindly given,
> That each may fill the circuit mark'd by Heaven!"

hardly applies here; namely, to evils that stare us in the face, and that might be averted with the least prudence or resolution. But nothing can be done. How should it? A slight evil, a distant danger will not move them; and a more imminent one only makes them turn away from it in greater precipitation and alarm. The more desperate their affairs grow, the more averse they are to look into them; and the greater the effort required to retrieve them, the more incapable they are of it. At first, they will not do anything; and afterwards, it is too late. The very

motives that imperiously urge them to self-reflection and amendment, combine with their natural disposition to prevent it. This amounts pretty nearly to a mathematical demonstration. Ease, vanity, pleasure, are the ruling passions in such cases. How will you conquer these, or wean their infatuated votaries from them? By the dread of hardship, disgrace, pain? They turn from them and you who point them out as the alternative, with sickly disgust; and instead of a stronger effort of courage or self-denial to avert the crisis, hasten it by a wilful determination to pamper the disease in every way, and arm themselves, not with fortitude to bear or to repel the consequences, but with judicial blindness to their approach. Will you rouse the indolent procrastinator to an irksome but necessary effort, by showing him how much he has to do? He will only draw back the more for all your entreaties and representations. If of a sanguine turn, he will make a slight attempt at a new plan of life, be satisfied with the first appearance of reform, and relapse into indolence again. If timid and undecided, the hopelessness of the undertaking will put him out of heart with it, and he will stand still in despair. Will you save a vain man from ruin, by pointing out the obloquy and ridicule that await him in his present career? He smiles at your forebodings as fantastical; or the more they are realized around him, the more he is impelled to keep out the galling conviction, and the more fondly he clings to flattery and death. He will not make a bold and resolute attempt to recover his reputation, because that would imply that it was capable of being soiled or injured; or he no sooner meditates some desultory project, than he takes credit to himself for the execution, and is delighted to wear his unearned laurels while the thing is barely talked of. The chance of success relieves the uneasiness of his apprehensions; so that he makes use of the interval only to flatter his favorite infirmity again. Would you wean a man from sensual excesses by the inevitable consequences to which they lead?—What holds more antipathy to pleasure than pain? The mind given up to self-indulgence, revolts at suffering; and throws it from it as an unaccountable anomaly, as a piece of injustice when it comes. Much less will it acknowledge any affinity with or subjection to it as a mere threat. If the prediction does not imme-

diately come true, we laugh at the prophet of ill: if it is verified, we hate our adviser proportionably, hug our vices the closer and hold them dearer and more precious, the more they cost us. We resent wholesome counsel as an impertinence, and consider those who warn us of impending mischief, as if they had brought it on our heads. We cry out with the poetical enthusiast—

> "And let us nurse the fond deceit;
> And what if we must die in sorrow?
> Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,
> Though grief and pain should come to-morrow?"

But oh thou! who didst lend me speech when I was dumb, to whom I owe it that I have not crept on my belly all the days of my life like a serpent, but sometimes lift my forked crest or tread the empyrean, wake thou out of thy mid-day slumbers! Shake off the heavy honey-dew of thy soul, no longer lulled with that Circean cup, drinking thy own thoughts with thy own ears, but start up in thy promised likeness, and shake the pillared rottenness of the world! Leave not thy sounding words in air, write them in marble, and teach the coming age heroic truths! Up, and wake the echoes of Time! Rich in deepest lore, die not the bed-rid churl of knowledge, leaving the survivors unblest! Set, set as thou didst rise in pomp and gladness! Dart like the sun-flower one broad, golden flash of light; and ere thou ascendest thy native sky, show us the steps by which thou didst scale the Heaven of philosophy, with Truth and Fancy for thy equal guides, that we may catch thy mantle, rainbow-dipped, and still read thy words dear to Memory, dearer to Fame!

There is another branch of this character, which is the trifling or dilatory character. Such persons are always creating difficulties, and unable or unwilling to remove them. They cannot brush aside a cobweb, and are stopped by an insect's wing. Their character is imbecility, rather than effeminacy. The want of energy and resolution, in the persons last described, arises from the habitual and inveterate predominance of other feelings and motives; in these it is a mere want of energy and resolution, that is, an inherent natural defect of vigor of nerve and voluntary power. There is a specific levity about such persons, so that

you cannot propel them to any object, or give them a decided *momentum* in any direction or pursuit. They turn back, as it were, on the occasion that should project them forward with manly force and vehemence. They shrink from intrepidity of purpose, and are alarmed at the idea of attaining their end too soon. They will not act with steadiness or spirit, either for themselves or you. If you chalk out a line of conduct for them, or commission them to execute a certain task, they are sure to conjure up some insignificant objection or fanciful impediment in the way, and are withheld from striking an effectual blow by mere feebleness of character. They may be officious, good-natured, friendly, generous in disposition, but they are of no use to any one. They will put themselves to twice the trouble you desire, not to carry your point, but to defeat it; and in obviating needless objections neglect the main business. If they do what you want, it is neither at the time nor in the manner that you wish. This timidity amounts to treachery; for by always anticipating some misfortune or disgrace, they realize their unmeaning apprehensions. The little bears sway in their minds over the great: a small inconvenience outweighs a solid and indispensable advantage; and their strongest bias is uniformly derived from the weakest motive. They hesitate about the best way of beginning a thing till the opportunity for action is lost, and are less anxious about its being done than the precise manner of doing it. They will destroy a passage sooner than let an objectionable word pass; and are much less concerned about the truth or the beauty of an image, than about the reception it will meet with from the critics. They alter what they write, not because it is, but because it may possibly be wrong; and in their tremulous solicitude to avoid imaginary blunders, run into real ones. What is curious enough is, that with all this caution and delicacy, they are continually liable to extraordinary oversights. They are in fact so full of all sorts of idle apprehensions, that they do not know how to distinguish real from imaginary grounds of apprehension; and they often give some unaccountable offence either from assuming a sudden boldness half in sport, or while they are secretly pluming themselves on their dexterity in avoiding everything exceptionable; and the same distraction of motive and short-sightedness

which gets them into scrapes, hinders them from seeing their way out of them. Such persons (often of ingenious and susceptible minds) are constantly at cross-purposes with themselves and others; will neither do things nor let others do them; and whether they succeed or fail, never feel confident or at their ease. They spoil the freshness and originality of their own thoughts by asking contradictory advice; and in befriending others, while they are *about it and about it*, you might have done the thing yourself a dozen times over.

There is nothing more to be esteemed than a manly firmness and decision of character. I like a person who knows his own mind and sticks to it; who sees at once what is to be done in given circumstances and does it. He does not beat about the bush for difficulties or excuses, but goes the shortest and most effectual way to work to attain his own ends, or to accomplish a useful object. If he can serve you, he will do so; if he cannot, he will say so without keeping you in needless suspense, or laying you under pretended obligations. The applying to him in any laudable undertaking is not like stirring "a dish of skimmed milk." There is stuff in him, and it is of the right practicable sort. He is not all his life at hawk and buzzard whether he shall be a Whig or a Tory, a friend or foe, a knave or a fool; but thinks that life is short, and that there is no time to play fantastic tricks in it, to tamper with principles, or trifle with individual feelings. If he gives you a character, he does not add a damning clause to it: he does not pick holes in you, lest others should, or anticipate objections lest he should be thought to be blinded by a childish partiality. His object is to serve you; and not to play the game into your enemies' hands.

> "A generous friendship no cold medium knows,
> Burns with one love, with one resentment glows."

I should be sorry for any one to say what he did not think of me; but I should not be pleased to see him slink out of his acknowledged opinion, lest it should not be confirmed by malice or stupidity. He who is well acquainted and well inclined to you, ought to give the tone, not to receive it from others, and may set it to what key he pleases in certain cases.

There are those of whom it has been said, that to them an obligation is a reason for not doing anything, and there are others who are invariably led to do the reverse of what they should. The last are perverse, the first impracticable people. Opposed to the effeminate in disposition and manners are the coarse and brutal. As those were all softness and smoothness, these affect or are naturally attracted to whatever is vulgar and violent, harsh and repulsive in tone, in modes of speech, in forms of address, in gesture and behavior. Thus there are some who ape the lisping of the fine lady, the drawling of the fine gentleman, and others who all their lives delight in and catch the uncouth dialect, the manners and expressions of clowns and hoydens. The last are governed by an instinct of the disagreeable, by an appetite and headlong rage for violating decorum, and hurting other people's feelings, their own being excited and enlivened by the shock. They deal in home truths, unpleasant reflections, and unwelcome matters of fact; as the others are all compliment and complaisance, insincerity and insipidity.

We may observe an effeminacy of style, in some degree corresponding to effeminacy of character. Writers of this stamp are great interliners of what they indite, alterers of indifferent phrases, and the plague of printers' devils. By an effeminate style I would be understood to mean one that is all florid, all fine; that cloys by its sweetness, and tires by its sameness. Such are what Dryden calls "calm, peaceable writers." They only aim to please, and never offend by truth or disturb by singularity. Every thought must be beautiful *per se*, every expression equally fine. They do not delight in vulgarisms, but in common-places, and dress out unmeaning forms in all the colors of the rainbow. They do not go out of their way to think—that would startle the indolence of the reader: they cannot express a trite thought in common words—that would be a sacrifice of their own vanity. They are not sparing of tinsel, for it costs nothing. Their works should be printed, as they generally are, on hot-pressed paper, with vignette margins. The Della Cruscan school comes under this description, but is now nearly exploded. Lord Byron is a pampered and aristocratic writer, but he is not effeminate, or we should not have his works with only the printer's name to them

I cannot help thinking that the fault of Mr. Keats's poems was a deficiency in masculine energy of style He had beauty, tenderness, delicacy, in an uncommon degree, but there was a want of strength and substance. His Endymion is a very delightful description of the illusions of a youthful imagination, given up to airy dreams—we have flowers, clouds, rainbows, moonlight, all sweet sounds and smells, and Oreads and Dryads flitting by—but there is nothing tangible in it, nothing marked or palpable—we have none of the hardy spirit or rigid forms of antiquity. He painted his own thoughts and character; and did not transport himself into the fabulous and heroic ages. There is a want of action, of character, and so far, of imagination, but there is exquisite fancy. All is soft and fleshy, without bone or muscle. We see in him the youth, without the manhood of poetry. His genius breathed "vernal delight and joy."—"Like Maia's son he stood and shook his plumes," with fragrance filled. His mind was redolent of spring. He had not the fierceness of summer, nor the richness of autumn, and winter he seemed not to have known, till he felt the icy hand of death!

ESSAY XXIX.

Whether Actors ought to sit in the Boxes?

I THINK not, and for the following reasons, as well as I can give them:—

Actors belong to the public: their persons are not their own property. They exhibit themselves on the stage: that is enough, without displaying themselves in the boxes of the theatre. I conceive that an actor, on account of the very circumstances of his profession, ought to keep himself as much *incognito* as possible. He plays a number of parts disguised, transformed into them as much as he can "by his so potent art," and he should not disturb this borrowed impression by unmasking before company, more than he can help. Let him go into the pit, if he pleases, to see —not into the first circle, to be seen. He is seen enough without that: he is the centre of an illusion that he is bound to support, both, as it appears to me, by a certain self-respect which should repel idle curiosity, and by a certain deference to the public, in whom he has inspired certain prejudices which he is covenanted not to break. He represents the majesty of successive kings; he takes the responsibility of heroes and lovers on himself; the mantle of genius and nature falls on his shoulders; we "pile millions" of associations on him, under which he should be "buried quick," and not perk out an inauspicious face upon us, with a plain-cut coat, to say—"What fools you all were!—I am not Hamlet the Dane!"

It is very well and in strict propriety for Mr. Matthews, in his AT HOME, after he has been imitating his inimitable Scotchwoman, to slip out as quick as lightning, and appear in the side-box shaking hands with our old friend Jack Bannister. It adds to our surprise at the versatility of his changes of place and appearance, and he had been before us in his own person during a great part

of the evening. There was no harm done—no imaginary spell broken—no discontinuity of thought or sentiment. Mr. Matthews is himself (without offence be it spoken) both a cleverer and more respectable man than many of the characters he represents. Not so when

> "O'er the stage the Ghost of Hamlet stalks,
> Othello rages, Desdemona mourns,
> And poor Monimia pours her soul in love"

A different feeling then prevails:—close, close the scene upon them, and never break that fine phantasmagoria of the brain. Or if it must be done at all, let us choose some other time and place for it: let no one wantonly dash the Circean cup from our lips, or dissolve the spirit of enchantment in the very palace of enchantment. Go, Mr. ——, and sit somewhere else! What a thing it is, for instance, for any part of an actor's dress to come off unexpectedly while he is playing! What a *cut* it is upon himself and the audience! What an effort he has to recover himself, and struggle through this exposure of the naked truth! It has been considered as one of the triumphs of Garrick's tragic power, that once, when he was playing Lear, his crown of straw came off, and nobody laughed or took the least notice, so much had he identified himself with the character. Was he, after this, to pay so little respect to the feelings he had inspired, as to tear off his tattered robes, and take the old, crazed king with him to play the fool in the boxes?

> "No; let him pass Vex not his parting spirit,
> Nor on the rack of this rough world
> Stretch him out farther!"

Some lady is said to have fallen in love with Garrick from being present when he played the part of Romeo, on which he observed, that he would undertake to cure her of her folly if she would only come and see him in Abel Drugger. So the modern tragedian and fine gentleman, by appearing to advantage, and conspicuously, *in propriâ personâ*, may easily cure us of our predilection for all the principal characters he shines in. "Sir! do you think Alexander looked o' this fashion in his life-time, or was perfumed so?

Had Julius Cæsar such a nose? or wore his frill as you do? You have slain I don't know how many heroes 'with a bare bodkin,' the gold pin in your shirt, and spoiled all the fine love speeches you will ever make by picking your teeth with that inimitable air!"

An actor, after having performed his part well, instead of courting farther distinction, should affect obscurity, and "steal most guilty-like away," conscious of admiration that he can support nowhere but in his proper sphere, and jealous of his own and others' good opinion of him, in proportion as he is a darling in the public eye. He cannot avoid attracting disproportionate attention: why should he wish to fix it on himself in a perfectly flat and insignificant part, viz. his own character? It was a bad custom to bring authors on the stage to crown them. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico est.* Even professed critics, I think, should be shy of putting themselves forward to applaud loudly: any one in a crowd has "a voice potential" as the press: it is either committing their pretensions a little indiscreetly, or confirming their own judgment by a clapping of hands. If you only go and give the cue lustily, the house seems in wonderful accord with your opinions. An actor, like a king, should only appear on state occasions. He loses popularity by too much publicity; or, according to the proverb, *familiarity breeds contempt.* Both characters personate a certain abstract idea, are seen in a fictitious costume, and when they have "shuffled off this more than mortal coil," they had better keep out of the way—the acts and sentiments emanating from themselves will not carry on the illusion of our prepossessions. Ordinary transactions do not give scope to grace and dignity like romantic situations, or prepared pageants, and the *little* is apt to prevail over the *great*, if we come to count the instances.

The motto of a great actor should be *aut Cæsar aut nihil.* I do not see how with his crown, or plume of feathers, he can get through those little box-doors without stooping and squeezing his artificial importance to tatters. The entrance of the stage is arched so high "that *players* may jet through, and keep their gorgeous turbans on, without good-morrow to the gods!"

The top-tragedian of the day has too large and splendid a train following him to have room for them in one of the dress-boxes

When he appears there, it should be enlarged express for the occasion: for at his heels march the figures, in full costume, of Cato, and Brutus, and Cassius, and of him with the falcon eye, and Othello, and Lear, and crook-backed Richard, and Hamlet Prince of Denmark, and numbers more, and demand entrance along with him, shadows to which he alone lends bodily substance! "The graves yawn and render up their dead to push us from our stools." There is a mighty bustle at the door, a gibbering and squeaking in the lobbies. An actor's retinue is imperial, it presses upon the imagination too much, and he should therefore slide unnoticed into the pit. Authors, who are in a manner his makers and masters, sit there contented—why should not he? "He is used to show himself." That then is the very reason he should conceal his person at other times. A habit of ostentation should not be reduced to a principle. If I had seen the late Gentleman Lewis fluttering in a prominent situation in the boxes, I should have been puzzled whether to think of him as the Copper Captain, or as Bobadil, or Ranger, or young Rapid, or Lord Foppington, or fifty other whimsical characters: then I should have got Munden and Quick, and a parcel more of them in my head, till "my brain would have been like a smoke-jack:" I should not have known what to make of it; but if I had seen him in the pit, I should merely have eyed him with respectful curiosity, and have told every one that *that* was Gentleman Lewis. We should have concluded from the circumstance that he was a modest, sensible man: we all knew beforehand that he could show off whenever he pleased!

There is one class of performers that I think is quite exempt from the foregoing reasoning, I mean *retired actors*. Come when they will and where they will, they are welcome to their old friends. They have as good a right to sit in the boxes as children at the holidays. But they do not, somehow, come often. It is but a melancholy recollection with them:—

——— "Then sweet,
Now sad to think on!"

Mrs. Garrick still goes often, and hears the applause of her husband over again in the shouts of the pit. Had Mrs. Pritchard or

Mrs. Clive been living, I am afraid we should have seen little of them—it would have been too *home* a feeling with them. Mrs. Siddons seldom if ever goes, and yet she is almost the only thing left worth seeing there. She need not stay away on account of any theory that I can form. She is out of the pale of all theories, and annihilates all rules. Wherever she sits there is grace and grandeur, there is tragedy personified. Her seat is the undivided throne of the Tragic Muse. She had no need of the robes, the sweeping train, the ornaments of the stage; in herself she is as great as any being she ever represented in the ripeness and plenitude of her power! I should not, I confess, have had the same paramount abstracted feeling at seeing John Kemble there, whom I venerate at a distance, and should not have known whether he was playing off the great man or the great actor;—

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."

I know it may be said in answer to all this pretext of keeping the character of the player inviolate—"What is there more common, in fact, than for the hero of a tragedy to speak the prologue, or than for the heroine, who has been stabbed or poisoned, to revive, and come forward laughing in the epilogue?" As to the epilogue, it is spoken to get rid of the idea of the tragedy altogether, and to ward off the fury of the pit, who may be bent on its damnation. The greatest incongruity you can hit upon is, therefore, the most proper for this purpose. But I deny that the hero of a tragedy, or the principal character in it, is ever pitched upon to deliver the prologue. It is always, by prescription, some walking-shadow, some poor player, who cannot even spoil a part of any consequence. Is there not Mr. C——— always at hand for this purpose, whom the late king pronounced three times to be "a bad actor?"* What is there in common between that accustomed

* Mr. Munden and Mr C——— went one Sunday to Windsor, to see the King. They passed with other spectators once or twice: at last, his late majesty distinguished Munden in the crowd, and called him to him. After treating him with much cordial familiarity, the king said, "And, pray, who is that with you?" Munden, with many congées, and contortions of face, replied, "An please your majesty, it's Mr. C———, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." "Oh! yes," said the king, "I know him well—a bad actor

wave of the hand, and the cocked hat under the arm, and any passion or person that can be brought forward on the stage? It is not that we can be said to acquire a prejudice against so harmless an actor as Mr. C———; we are born with a prejudice against a speaker of prologues. It is an innate idea: a natural instinct: there is a particular organ in the brain provided for it. Do we not all hate a manager? It is not because he is insolent or impertinent, or fond of making ridiculous speeches, or a notorious puffer, or ignorant, or mean, or vain, but it is because we see him in a coat, waistcoat, and breeches. The stage is the world of fantasy: it is Queen Mab that has invited us to her revels there, and all that have to do with it should wear motley!

Lastly, there are some actors by profession, whose faces we like to see in the boxes or anywhere else; but it is because they are no actors, but rather gentlemen and scholars, and in their proper places in the boxes, or wherever they are. Does not an actor himself, I would ask, feel conscious and awkward in the boxes, if he thinks that he is known? And does he not sit there in spite of this uneasy feeling, and run the gauntlets of impertinent looks and whispers, only to get a little by admiration, as he thinks? It is hardly to be supposed that he comes to see the play, the show. He must have enough of plays and finery. But he wants to see a favorite (perhaps a rival) actor in a striking part. Then the place for him to do this is the pit. Painters, I know, always get as close up to a picture they want to copy, as they can; and I should imagine actors would want to do the same, in order to look into the texture and mechanism of their art. Even theatrical critics can make nothing of a part that they see from the boxes. If you sit in the stage-box, your attention is drawn off by the company and other circumstances. If you get to a distance (so as to be out of the reach of notice) you can neither hear nor see well. For myself, I would as soon take a seat on the top of the Monument to give an account of a first appearance, as go into the second or third tier of boxes to do it. I

a bad actor, a bad actor!" Why kings should repeat what they say three times, is odd: their saying it once is quite enough. I have always liked Mr. C———'s face since I heard this anecdote, and perhaps the telling it may have the same effect on other people.

went, but the other day, with a box-ticket, to see Miss Fanny Brunton come out in Juliet, and Mr. Macready make a first appearance in Romeo; and though I was told (by a tolerable judge) that the new Juliet was the most elegant figure on the stage, and that Mr. Macready's Romeo was quite beautiful, I vow to God I knew nothing of it. So little could I tell of the matter, that at one time I mistook Mr. Horrebow for Mr. Abbott. I have seen Mr. Kean play Sir Giles Overreach one night from the front of the pit, and a few nights after from the front boxes, facing the stage. It was another thing altogether. That which had been so lately nothing but flesh and blood, a living fibre, "instinct with fire" and spirit, was no better than a little fantoccini figure, darting backwards and forwards on the stage, starting, screaming, and playing a number of fantastic tricks before the audience. I could account, in the latter instance, for the little approbation of the performance manifested around me, and also for the general scepticism with respect to Mr. Kean's acting, which has been said to prevail among those who cannot condescend to go into the pit, and have not interest in the orchestra—to see him act. They may then stay away altogether. His face is the running comment on his acting, which reconciles the audience to it. Without that index to his mind, you are not prepared for the vehemence and suddenness of his gestures; his pauses are long, abrupt, and unaccountable, if not filled up by the expression; it is in the working of his face that you see the writhing and coiling up of the passions before they make their serpent-spring; the lightning of his eye precedes the hoarse burst of thunder from his voice.

One may go into the boxes, indeed, and criticise acting and actors with Sterne's stop-watch, but no otherwise—"'And between the nominative case and the verb (which, as your lordship knows, should agree together in number, person, &c.) there was a full pause of a second and two thirds.' 'But was the eye silent—did the look say nothing?'—'I looked only at the stop-watch, my lord.'—'Excellent critic!'"—If any other actor, indeed, goes to see Mr. Kean act, with a view *to avoid imitation*, this may be the place, or rather it is the way to run into it, for you see only his extravagances and defects, which are the most

easily carried away. Mr. Matthews may translate him into an AT HOME even from the *slips!*—Distinguished actors then ought, I conceive, to set the example of going into the pit, were it only for their own sakes. I remember a trifling circumstance, which I worked up at the time into a confirmation of this theory of mine, engrafted on old prejudice and tradition.* I had got into the middle of the pit, at considerable risk of broken bones, to see Mr. Kean in one of his early parts, when I perceived two young men seated a little behind me, with a certain space left round them. They were dressed in the height of the fashion, in light drab-colored great coats, and with their shirt-sleeves drawn down over their hands, at a time when this was not so common as it has since become. I took them for younger sons of some old family at least. One of them that was very good-looking, I thought might be Lord Byron, and his companion might be Mr. Hobhouse. They seemed to have wandered from another sphere to this our planet to witness a masterly performance to the utmost advantage. This stamped the thing. They were, undoubtedly, young men of rank and fashion; but their taste was greater than their regard for appearance. The pit was, after all, the true resort of thorough-bred critics and amateurs. When there was anything worth seeing, this was the place; and I began to feel a sort of reflected importance in the consciousness that I also was a critic. Nobody sat near them—it would have seemed like an intrusion. Not a syllable was uttered.—They were two clerks in the Victualling Office!

What I would insist on, then, is this—that for Mr. Kean, or Mr. Young, or Mr. Macready, or any of those that are "cried out upon in the top of the compass" to obtrude themselves voluntarily or ostentatiously upon our notice, when they are *out of character*, is a solecism in theatricals. For them to thrust themselves forward before the scenes, is to drag us behind them against our will, than which nothing can be more fatal to a true passion for the stage, and which is a privilege that should be kept sacred from impertinent curiosity. Oh! while I live, let me not

* The trunk-maker, I grant, in the Spectator's time, sat in the two-shilling gallery. But that was in the Spectator's time, and not in the days of Mr. Smirke and Mr. Wyatt.

be admitted (under special favor) to an actor's dressing-room. Let me not see how Cato painted, or how Cæsar combed! Let me not meet the prompt-boys in the passage, nor see the half-lighted candles stuck against the bare walls, nor hear the creaking of machines, or the fiddlers laughing; nor see a Columbine practising a pirouette in sober sadness, nor Mr. Grimaldi's face drop from mirth to sudden melancholy as he passes the side-scene, as if a shadow crossed it, nor witness the long-chinned generation of the pantomime sit twirling their thumbs, nor overlook the fellow who holds the candle for the moon in the scene between Lorenzo and Jessica! Spare me this insight into secrets I am not bound to know. The stage is not a mistress that we are sworn to undress. Why should we look behind the glass of fashion? Why should we prick the bubble that reflects the world, and turn it to a little soap and water? Trust a little to first appearances—leave something to fancy. I observe that the great puppets of the real stage, who themselves play a grand part, like to get into the boxes over the stage; where they see nothing from the proper point of view, but peep and pry into what is going on like a magpie looking into a marrow-bone. This is just like them. So they look down upon human life, of which they are ignorant. They see the exits and entrances of the players, something that they suspect is meant to be kept from them (for they think they are always liable to be imposed upon): the petty pageant of an hour ends with each scene long before the catastrophe, and the tragedy of life is turned to farce under their eyes. These people laugh loud at a pantomime, and are delighted with clowns and pantaloons. They pay no attention to anything else. The stage-boxes exist in contempt of the stage and common sense. The private boxes, on the contrary, should be reserved as the receptacle for the officers of state and great diplomatic characters, who wish to avoid, rather than court popular notice!

ESSAY XXX.

On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority.

The chief disadvantage of knowing more and seeing farther than others, is not to be generally understood. A man is, in consequence of this, liable to start paradoxes, which immediately transport him beyond the reach of the common-place reader. A person speaking once in a slighting manner of a very original-minded man, received for answer—"He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!"

Petrarch complains, that "Nature had made him different from other people"—*singular' d' altra genti*. The great happiness of life is, to be neither better nor worse than the general run of those you meet with. If you are beneath them, you are trampled upon; if you are above them, you soon find a mortifying level in their indifference to what you particularly pique yourself upon. What is the use of being moral in a night-cellar, or wise in Bedlam? "To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand." So says Shakspeare; and the commentators have not added that, under these circumstances, a man is more likely to become the butt of slander than the mark of admiration for being so. "How now, thou particular fellow?"* is the common answer to all such out-of-the-way pretensions. By not doing as those at Rome do, we cut ourselves off from good-fellowship and society. We speak another language, have notions of our own, and are treated as of a different species. Nothing can be more awkward than to intrude with any such far-fetched ideas among the common herd, who will be sure to

> —— "Stand all astonied, like a sort of steers,
> 'Mongst whom some beast of strange and foreign race
> Unwares is chanced, far straying from his peers:
> So will their ghastly gaze betray their hidden fears."

* Jack Cade's salutation to one who tries to recommend himself by saying he can write and read.—See Henry VI., Part Second.

Ignorance of another's meaning is a sufficient cause of fear, and fear produces hatred: hence the suspicion and rancor entertained against all those who set up for greater refinement and wisdom than their neighbors. It is in vain to think of softening down this spirit of hostility by simplicity of manners, or by condescending to persons of low estate. The more you condescend, the more they will presume upon it; they will fear you less, but hate you more; and will be the more determined to take their revenge on you for a superiority as to which they are entirely in the dark, and of which you yourself seem to entertain considerable doubts All the humility in the world will only pass for weakness and folly. They have no notion of such a thing. They always put their best foot forward; and argue that you would do the same if you had any such wonderful talents as people say. You had better, therefore, play off the great man at once—hector, swagger, talk big, and ride the high horse over them: you may by this means extort outward respect or common civility; but you will get nothing (with low people) by forbearance and good-nature but open insult or silent contempt. C—— always talks to people about what they don't understand: I, for one, endeavor to talk to them about what they do understand, and find I only get the more ill-will by it. They conceive I do not think them capable of anything better; that I do not think it worth while, as the vulgar saying is, to *throw a word to a dog*. I once complained of this to C——, thinking it hard I should be sent to Coventry for not making a prodigious display. He said, "As you assume a certain character, you ought to produce your credentials. It is a tax upon people's good-nature to admit superiority of any kind, even where there is the most evident proof of it: but it is too hard a task for the imagination to admit it without any apparent ground at all."

There is not a greater error than to suppose that you avoid the envy, malice, and uncharitableness, so common in the world, by going among people without pretensions. There are no people who have no pretensions; or the fewer their pretensions, the less they can afford to acknowledge yours without some sort of value received. The more information individuals possess, or the more they have refined upon any subject, the more readily can they

conceive and admit the same kind of superiority to themselves that they feel over others. But from the low, dull, level sink of ignorance and vulgarity, no idea or love of excellence can arise. You think you are doing mighty well with them; that you are laying aside the buckram of pedantry and pretence, and getting the character of a plain, unassuming, good sort of fellow. It will not do. All the while that you are making these familiar advances, and wanting to be at your ease, they are trying to recover the wind of you. You may forget that you are an author, an artist, or what not—they do not forget that they are nothing, nor bate one jot of their desire to prove you in the same predicament. They take hold of some circumstance in your dress; your manner of entering a room is diff'rent from that of other people; you do not eat vegetables—that 's odd; you have a particular phrase, which they repeat, and this becomes a sort of standing joke; you look grave, or ill; you talk, or are more silent than usual: you are in or out of pocket: all these petty, inconsiderable circumstances, in which you resemble, or are unlike other people, form so many counts in the indictment which is going on in their imaginations against you, and are so many contradictions in your character. In any one else they would pass unnoticed, but in a person of whom they had heard so much, they cannot make them out at all. Meanwhile, those things in which you may really excel, go for nothing, because they cannot judge of them. They speak highly of some book which you do not like, and therefore you make no answer. You recommend them to go and see some picture, in which they do not find much to admire. How are you to convince them that you are right? Can you make them perceive that the fault is in them, and not in the picture, unless you could give them your knowledge? They hardly distinguish between a Correggio and a common daub. Does this bring you any nearer to an understanding? The more you know of the difference, the more deeply you feel it; or the more earnestly you wish to convey it, the farther do you find yourself removed to an immeasurable distance from the possibility of making them enter into views and feelings of which they have not even the first rudiments. You cannot make them see with your eyes, and must judge for themselves.

Intellectual is not like bodily strength. You have no hold of the understanding of others but by their sympathy. Your knowing, in fact, so much more about a subject does not give you a superiority, that is, a power over them, but only renders it the more impossible for you to make the least impression on them. Is it then an advantage to you? It may be, as it relates to your own private satisfaction, but it places a greater gulf between you and society. It throws stumbling-blocks in your way at every turn. All that you take most pride and pleasure in is lost upon the vulgar eye. What they are pleased with is a matter of indifference or of distaste to you. In seeing a number of persons turn over a portfolio of prints from different masters, what a trial it is to the patience, how it jars the nerves to hear them fall into raptures at some common-place flimsy thing, and pass over some divine expression of countenance without notice, or with a remark that it is very singular-looking? How useless it is in such cases to fret or argue, or remonstrate? Is it not quite as well to be without all this hypercritical, fastidious knowledge, and to be pleased or displeased as it happens, or struck with the first fault or beauty that is pointed out by others? I would be glad almost to change my acquaintance with pictures, with books, and, certainly, what I know of mankind, for anybody's ignorance of them!

It is recorded in the life of some worthy (whose name I forget) that he was one of those "who loved hospitality and respect:" and I profess to belong to the same classification of mankind. Civility is with me a jewel. I like a little comfortable cheer, and careless, indolent, chat. I hate to be always wise, or aiming at wisdom. I have enough to do with literary cabals, questions, critics, actors, essay-writing, without taking them out with me for recreation, and into all companies. I wish at these times to pass for a good-humored fellow; and good-will is all I ask in return to make good company. I do not desire to be always posing myself or others with the questions of fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute, &c. I must unbend sometimes. I must occasionally lie fallow. The kind of conversation that I affect most is what sort of a day it is, and whether it is likely to rain or hold up fine for to-morrow. This I consider as enjoying the *otium cum digni-*

tate, as the end and privilege of a life of study. I would resign myself to this state of easy indifference, but I find I cannot. I must maintain a certain pretension, which is far enough from my wish. I must be put on my defence, I must take up the gauntlet continually, or I find I lose ground. "I am nothing, if not critical." While I am thinking what o'clock it is, or how I came to blunder in quoting a well-known passage, as if I had done it on purpose, others are thinking whether I am not really as dull a fellow as I am sometimes said to be. If a drizzling shower patters against the windows, it puts me in mind of a mild spring rain, from which I retired twenty years ago, into a little public house near Wem in Shropshire, and while I saw the plants and shrubs before the door imbibe the dewy moisture, quaffed a glass of sparkling ale, and walked home in the dusk of evening, brighter to me than noon-day suns at present are! Would I indulge this feeling? In vain. They ask me what news there is, and stare if I say I don't know. If a new actress has come out, why must I have seen her? If a new novel has appeared, why must I have read it? I, at one time, used to go and take a hand at cribbage with a friend, and afterwards discuss a cold sirloin of beef, and throw out a few lack-a-daisical remarks, in a way to please himself, but it would not do long. I set up little pretension, and therefore the little that I did set up was taken from me. As I said nothing on that subject myself, it was continually thrown in my teeth that I was *an author*. From having me at this disadvantage, my friend wanted to peg on a hole or two in the game, and was displeased if I would not let him. If I won of him, it was hard he should be beat by an author. If he won, it would be strange if he did not understand the game better than I did. If I mentioned my favorite game of rackets, there was a general silence, as if this was my weak point. If I complained of being ill, it was asked why I made myself so? If I said such an actor had played a part well, the answer was, there was a different account in one of the newspapers. If any allusion was made to men of letters, there was a suppressed smile. If I told a humorous story, it was difficult to say whether the laugh was at me or at the narrative. The wife hated me for my ugly face: the servants because I could not always get them tickets for the play, and

because they could not tell exactly what an author meant. If a paragraph appeared against anything I had written, I found it was ready there before me, and I was to undergo a regular *roasting*. I submitted to all this till I was tired, and then I gave it up.

One of the miseries of intellectual pretensions is, that nine-tenths of those you come in contact with do not know whether you are an imposter or not. I dread that certain anonymous criticisms should get into the hands of servants where I go, or that my hatter or shoemaker should happen to read them, who cannot possibly tell whether they are well or ill-founded. The ignorance of the world leaves one at the mercy of its malice. There are people whose good opinion or good will you want, setting aside all literary pretensions; and it is hard to lose by an ill report (which you have no means of rectifying) what you cannot gain by a good one. After a *diatribe* in the —— (which is taken in by a gentleman who occupies my old apartments on the first floor) my landlord brings me up his bill (of some standing), and on my offering to give him so much in money, and a note of hand for the rest, shakes his head, and says, he is afraid he could make no use of it. Soon after, the daughter comes in, and, on my mentioning the circumstance carelessly to her, replies gravely, "that indeed her father has been almost ruined by bills." *This is the unkindest cut of all.* It is in vain for me to endeavor to explain that the publication in which I am abused is a mere government engine—an organ of a political faction. They know nothing about that. They only know such and such imputations are thrown out; and the more I try to remove them, the more they think there is some truth in them. Perhaps the people of the house are strong Tories—government agents of some sort. Is it for me to enlighten their ignorance? If I say, I once wrote a thing called Prince Maurice's Parrot, and an Essay on the Regal Character, in the former of which allusion is made to a noble marquis, and in the latter to a great personage (so at least, I am told, it has been construed), and that Mr. Croker has peremptory instructions to retaliate; they cannot conceive what connexion there can be between me and such distinguished characters. I can get no farther. Such is the misery of preten-

sions beyond your situation, and which are not backed by any external symbols of wealth or rank, intelligible to all mankind!

The impertinence of admiration is scarcely more tolerable than the demonstration of contempt. I have known a person, whom I had never seen before, besieging me all dinner-time with asking, what articles I had written for the Edinburgh Review. I was at last ashamed to answer to my splendid sins in that way. Others will pick out something not yours, and say, they are sure no one else could write it. By the first sentence they can always tell your style. Now I hate my style to be known; as I hate all *idiosyncrasy*. These obsequious flatterers could not pay me a worse compliment. Then there are those who make a point of reading everything you write (which is fulsome); while others, more provoking, regularly lend your works to a friend as soon as they receive them. They pretty well know your notions on the different subjects, from having heard you talk about them. Besides they have a greater value for your personal character than they have for your writings. You explain things better in a common way, when you are not aiming at effect. Others tell you of the faults they have heard found with your last book, and that they defend your style in general from a charge of obscurity. A friend once told me of a quarrel he had had with a near relation, who denied that I knew how to spell the commonest words. These are comfortable confidential communications, to which authors, who have their friends and excusers, are subject. A gentleman told me, that a lady had objected to my use of the word *learneder*, as bad grammar. He said he thought it a pity that I did not take more care, but that the lady was perhaps prejudiced, as her husband held a government office. I looked for the word, and found it in a motto from Butler. I was piqued, and desired him to tell the fair critic, that the fault was not in me, but in one who had far more wit, more learning, and loyalty than I could pretend to. Then, again, some will pick out the flattest thing of yours they can find, to load it with panegyrics; and others tell you (by way of letting you see how high they rank your capacity), that your best passages are failures. L—— has a knack of tasting (or as he would say *pelting*) the insipid: L. H. has a trick of turning away from the relishing morsels you put on his

plate. There is no getting the start of some people. Do what you will, they can do it better; meet with what success you may, their own good opinion stands them in better stead, and runs before the applause of the world. I once showed a person of this over-weening turn (with no small triumph I confess) a letter of a very flattering description I had received from the celebrated Count Stendhal, dated Rome. He returned it with a smile of indifference, and said, he had a letter from Rome himself the day before, from his friend S——! I did not think this "germane to the matter." G—dw—n pretends I never wrote anything worth a farthing but my answers to Vetus, and that I fail altogether when I attempt to write an essay, or anything in a short compass.

What can one do in such cases? Shall I confess a weakness? The only set-off I know to these rebuffs and mortifications, is sometimes in an accidental notice or involuntary mark of distinction from a stranger. I feel the force of Horace's *digito monstrari*—I like to be pointed out in the street, or to hear people ask in Mr. Powell's court, *which is Mr. H——?* This is to me a pleasing extension of one's personal identity. Your name so repeated leaves an echo like music on the ear: it stirs the blood like the sound of a trumpet. It shows that other people are curious to see you: that they think of you, and feel an interest in you without your knowing it. This is a bolster to lean upon; a lining to your poor, shivering, threadbare opinion of yourself. You want some such cordial to exhausted spirits, and relief to the dreariness of abstract speculation. You are something; and, from occupying a place in the thoughts of others, think less contemptuously of yourself. You are the better able to run the gauntlet of prejudice and vulgar abuse. It is pleasant in this way to have your opinion quoted against yourself, and your own sayings repeated to you as good things. I was once talking with an intelligent man in the pit, and criticising Mr. Knight's performance of Filch. "Ah!" he said, "little Simmons was the fellow to play that character." He added, "There was a most excellent remark made upon his acting it in the EXAMINER (I think it was)—*That he looked as if he had the gallows in one eye and a pretty girl in the other.*" I said nothing, but was in

remarkably good humor the rest of the evening. I have seldom been in a company where fives-playing has been talked of, but some one has asked, in the course of it, "Pray did any one ever see an account of one Cavanagh, that appeared some time back in most of the papers? Is it known who wrote it?" These are trying moments. I had a triumph over a person, whose name I will not mention, on the following occasion. I happened to be saying something about Burke, and was expressing my opinion of his talents in no measured terms, when this gentleman interrupted me by saying, he thought, for his part, that Burke had been greatly over-rated, and then added, in a careless way, "Pray did you read a character of him in the last number of the ——— ?" "I wrote it!"—I could not resist the antithesis, but was afterwards ashamed of my momentary petulance. Yet no one, that I find, ever spares me.

Some persons seek out and obtrude themselves on public characters, in order, as it might seem, to pick out their failings, and afterwards betray them. Appearances are for it, but truth and a better knowledge of nature are against this interpretation of the matter. Sycophants and flatterers are undesignedly treacherous and fickle. They are prone to admire inordinately at first, and not finding a constant supply of food for this kind of sickly appetite, take a distaste to the object of their idolatry. To be even with themselves for their credulity, they sharpen their wits to spy out faults, and are delighted to find that this answers better than their first employment. It is a course of study, "lively, audible, and full of vent." They have the organ of wonder and the organ of fear in a prominent degree. The first requires new objects of admiration to satisfy its uneasy cravings: the second makes them crouch to power wherever its shifting standard appears, and willing to curry favor with all parties, and ready to betray any out of sheer weakness and servility. I do not think they mean any harm. At least, I can look at this obliquity with indifference in my own particular case. I have been more disposed to resent it as I have seen it practised upon others, where I have been better able to judge of the extent of the mischief, and the heartlessness and idiot folly it discovered.

I do not think great intellectual attainments are any recommendation to the women. They puzzle them, and are a diversion to the main question. If scholars talk to ladies of what they understand, their hearers are none the wiser: if they talk of other things, they only prove themselves fools. The conversation between Angelica and Foresight, in Love for Love, is a receipt in full for all such over-strained nonsense: while he is wandering among the signs of the zodiac, she is standing a tip-toe on the earth. It has been remarked that poets do not choose mistresses very wisely. I believe it is not choice, but necessity. If they could throw the handkerchief like the Grand Turk, I imagine we should see scarce mortals, but rather goddesses, surrounding their steps, and each exclaiming, with Lord Byron's own Ionian maid—

> "So shalt thou find me ever at thy side,
> Here and hereafter, if the last may be!"

Ah! no, these are bespoke, carried off by men of mortal, not ethereal mould, and thenceforth the poet, from whose mind the ideas of love and beauty are inseparable as dreams from sleep, goes on the forlorn hope of the passion, and dresses up the first Dulcinea that will take compassion on him, in all the colors of fancy. What boots it to complain if the delusion lasts for life, and the rainbow still paints its form in the cloud?

There is one mistake I would wish, if possible, to correct. Men of letters, artists, and others, not succeeding with women in a certain rank of life, think the objection is to their want of fortune, and that they shall stand a better chance by descending lower, where only their good qualities or talents will be thought of. Oh! worse and worse. The objection is to themselves, not to their fortune—to their abstraction, to their absence of mind, to their unintelligible and romantic notions. Women of education may have a glimpse of their meaning, may get a clue to their character, but to all others they are thick darkness. If the mistress smiles at their *ideal* advances, the maid will laugh outright: she will throw water over you, get her little sister to listen, send her sweetheart to ask you what you mean, will set the village or the house upon your back; it will be a farce, a comedy,

a standing jest for a year, and then the murder will out. Scholars should be sworn at Highgate. They are no match for chamber-maids, or wenches at lodging-houses. They had better try their hands on heiresses or ladies of quality. These last have high notions of themselves that may fit some of your epithets! They are above mortality, so are your thoughts! But with low life, trick, ignorance, and cunning, you have nothing in common. Whoever you are, that think you can make a compromise or a conquest there by good nature, or good sense, be warned by a friendly voice, and retreat in time from the unequal contest.

If, as I have said above, scholars are no match for chamber-maids, on the other hand, gentlemen are no match for black-guards. The former are on their honor, act on the square; the latter take all advantages, and have no idea of any other principle. It is astonishing how soon a fellow without education will learn to cheat. He is impervious to any ray of liberal knowledge; his understanding is

"Not pierceable by power of any star"—

but it is porous to all sorts of tricks, chicanery, stratagems, and knavery, by which anything is to be got. Mrs. Peachum, indeed, says, that "to succeed at the gaming table, the candidate should have the education of a nobleman." I do not know how far this example contradicts my theory. I think it is a rule that men in business should not be taught other things. Any one will be almost sure to make money who has no other idea in his head. A college education, or intense study of abstract truth, will not enable a man to drive a bargain, to overreach another, or even to guard himself from being overreached. As Shakspeare says, that "to have a good face is the effect of study, but reading and writing come by nature:" so it might be argued, that to be a knave is the gift of fortune, but to play the fool to advantage it is necessary to be a learned man. The best politicians are not those who are deeply grounded in mathematical or in ethical science. Rules stand in the way of expediency. Many a man has been hindered from pushing his fortune in the world by an early cultivation of his moral sense and has repented of it at

leisure during the rest of his life. A shrewd man said of my father, that he would not send a son of his to school to him on any account, for that by teaching him to speak the truth, he would disqualify him from getting his living in the world!

It is hardly necessary to add any illustration to prove that the most original and profound teachers are not always the most successful or popular writers. This is not merely a temporary disadvantage; but many great philosophers have not only been scouted while they were living, but forgotten as soon as they were dead. The name of Hobbes is perhaps sufficient to explain this assertion. But I do not wish to go farther into this part of the subject, which is obvious in itself. I have said, I believe, enough to take off the air of paradox which hangs over the title of this Essay.

ESSAY XXXI.

On Patronage and Puffing.

"A gentle husher, Vanity by name."—SPENSER.

A LADY was complaining to a friend of mine of the credulity of people in attending to quack advertisements, and wondering who could be taken in by them—"for that she had never bought but one half-guinea bottle of Dr. ———'s Elixir of Life, and it had done her no sort of good!" This anecdote seemed to explain pretty well what made it worth the doctor's while to advertise his wares in every newspaper in the kingdom. He would no doubt be satisfied if every delicate, skeptical invalid, in his majesty's dominions, gave his Elixir one trial, merely to show the absurdity of the thing. We affect to laugh at the folly of those who put faith in nostrums, but are willing to see ourselves whether there is any truth in them.

There is a strong tendency in the human mind to flatter itself with secret hopes, with some lucky reservation in our own favor, though reason may point out the grossness of the trick in general; and, besides, there is a wonderful power in words, formed into regular propositions, and printed in capital letters, to draw the assent after them, till we have proof of their fallacy. The ignorant and idle believe what they read, as Scotch philosophers demonstrate the existence of a material world, and other learned propositions, from the evidence of their senses. The ocular proof is all that is wanting in either case. As hypocrisy is said to be the highest compliment to virtue, the art of lying is the strongest acknowledgment of the force of truth. We can hardly *believe* a thing to be a lie, though we *know* it to be so. The "puff direct," even as it stands in the columns of the Times newspaper, branded with the title of Advertisement before it, claims some sort of attention and respect for the merits that it discloses though

we think the candidate for public favor and support has hit upon (perhaps) an injudicious way of laying them before the world. Still there may be something in them; and even the outrageous improbability and extravagance of the statement on the very face of it, stagger us, and leave a hankering to inquire farther into it, because we think the advertiser would hardly have the impudence to hazard such barefaced absurdities without some foundation. Such is the strength of the association between words and things in the mind—so much oftener must our credulity have been justified by the event than imposed upon. If every second story we heard was an invention, we should lose our mechanical disposition to trust to the meaning of sounds, just as when we have met with a number of counterfeit pieces of coin, we suspect good ones; but our implicit assent to what we hear is a proof how much more sincerity and good faith there is in the sum total of our dealings with one another, than artifice and imposture.

"To elevate and surprise" is the great art of quackery and puffing; to raise a lively and exaggerated image in the mind, and take it by surprise before it can recover breath, as it were; so that by having been caught in the trap, it is unwilling to retract entirely—has a secret desire to find itself in the right, and a determination to see whether it is or not. Describe a picture as *lofty*, *imposing*, and *grand*, these words excite certain ideas in the mind like the sound of a trumpet, which are not to be quelled, except by seeing the picture itself, nor even then if it is viewed by the help of a catalogue, written expressly for the occasion by the artist himself. It is not to be supposed that *he* would say such things of his picture, unless they were allowed by all the world; and he repeats them, on this gentle understanding, till all the world allows them.* So reputation runs in a vicious circle, and merit limps behind it, mortified and abashed at its own insignificance. It has been said that the test of fame or popularity is to consider the number of times your name is repeated by others, or is brought to their recollection in the course of a year. At this rate, a man has his reputation in his own hands, and by the help of puffing

* It is calculated that West cleared some hundred pounds by the catalogues that sold of his great picture of Death riding on the pale Horse.

and the press, may forestall the voice of posterity, and stun the "groundling" ear of his contemporaries. A name let off in your hearing continually, with some bouncing epithet affixed to it, startles you like the report of a pistol close at your ear; you cannot help the effect upon the imagination, though you know it is perfectly harmless—*vox et præterea nihil*. So, if you see the same name staring you in the face in great letters, at the corner of every street, you involuntarily think the owner of it must be a great man to occupy so large a space in the eye of the town. The appeal is made, in the first instance, to the senses, but it sinks below the surface into the mind. There are some, indeed, who publish their own disgrace, and make their names a common by-word and nuisance, notoriety being all that they want. A quack gets himself surreptitiously dubbed Doctor or Knight; and though you may laugh in his face, it pays expenses. Parolles and his drum typify many a modern adventurer, and court-candidate, for unearned laurels and unblushing honors. Of all puffs, lottery-puffs are the most ingenious and most innocent. A collection of them would make an amusing *Vade mecum*. They are still various and the same, with that infinite *ruse* with which they lull the reader at the outset out of all suspicion, the insinuating turn in the middle, the home-thrust at the ruling passion at last, by which your spare cash is conjured clean out of the pocket in spite of resolution, by the same stale, well-known, thousandth-time repeated, artifice of *All prizes* and *No blanks*—a self-evident imposition! Nothing, however, can be a stronger proof of the power of fascinating the public judgment through the eye alone. I know a gentleman who amassed a considerable fortune (so as to be able to keep his carriage) by printing nothing but lottery placards and hand-bills of a colossal size. Another friend of mine (of no mean talents) was applied to (as a snug thing in the way of business) to write regular lottery-puffs for a large house in the city, and on having a parcel of samples returned on his hands as done in too severe and terse a style, complained quaintly enough, "*That modest merit never could succeed!*" Even Lord Byron, as he tells us, has been accused of writing lottery-puffs. There are various ways of playing one's self off before the public, and keeping one's name alive. The newspapers, the lamp-posts, the walls of

empty houses, the shutters of windows, the blank covers of magazines and reviews, are open to every one. I have heard of a man of literary celebrity sitting in his study writing letters of remonstrance to himself, on the gross defects of a plan of education he had just published, and which remained unsold on the bookseller's counter. Another feigned himself dead in order to see what would be said of him in the newspapers, and to excite a sensation in this way. A flashy pamphlet has been run to a five-and-thirtieth edition, and thus ensured the writer a "deathless date" among political charlatans, by regularly striking off a new title-page to every fifty or a hundred copies that were sold. This is a vile practice. It is an erroneous idea got abroad (and which I will contradict here) that paragraphs are paid for in the leading Journals. It is quite out of the question. A favorable notice of an author, an actress, &c., may be inserted through interest or to oblige a friend, but it must invariably be done for *love*, not *money!*

When I formerly had to do with these sort of critical verdicts, I was generally sent out of the way when any *debutant* had a friend at court, and was to be tenderly handled. For the rest, or those of robust constitutions, I had *carte blanche* given me. Sometimes I ran out of the course, to be sure. Poor Perry! what bitter complaints he used to make, that by *running-a-muck* at lords and Scotchmen I should not leave him a place to dine out at! The expression of his face at these moments, as if he should shortly be without a friend in the world, was truly pitiable. What squabbles we used to have about Kean and Miss Stephens, the only theatrical favorites I ever had! Mrs. Billington had got some notion that Miss Stephens would never make a singer, and it was the torment of Perry's life (as he told me in confidence) that he could not get any two people to be of the same opinion on any one point. I shall not easily forget bringing him my account of her first appearance in the Beggar's Opera. I have reason to remember that article: it was almost the last I ever wrote with any pleasure to myself. I had been down on a visit to my friends near Chertsey, and, on my return, had stopped at an inn at Kingston-upon-Thames, where I had got the Beggar's Opera, and had read it overnight. The next day I

walked cheerfully to town. It was a fine sunny morning, in the end of autumn, and as I repeated the beautiful song, "Life knows no return of spring," I meditated my next day's criticism, trying to do all the justice I could to so inviting a subject. I was not a little proud of it by anticipation. I had just then begun to stammer out my sentiments on paper, and was in a kind of honeymoon of authorship. But soon after, my final hopes of happiness and of human liberty, were blighted nearly at the same time; and since then I have had no pleasure in anything:—

"And Love himself can flatter me no more."

It was not so ten years since (ten short years since.—Ah! how fast those years run that hurry us away from our last fond dream of bliss!) when I loitered along thy green retreats, oh! Twickenham, and conned over (with enthusiastic delight) the chequered view, which one of thy favorites drew of human life! I deposited my account of the play at the Morning Chronicle Office in the afternoon, and went to see Miss Stephens as Polly. Those were happy times, in which she first came out in this character, in Mandane, when she sang the delicious air, "If o'er the cruel tyrant, Love" (so as it can never be sung again), in Love in a Village, where the scene opened with her and Miss Matthews in a painted garden of roses and honeysuckles, and "Hope, thou nurse of young Desire," thrilled from two sweet voices in turn. Oh! may my ears sometimes still drink the same sweet sounds, embalmed with the spirit of youth, of health, and joy, but in the thoughts of an instant, but in a dream of fancy, and I shall hardly need to complain! When I got back, after the play, Perry called out with his cordial, grating voice, "Well, how did she do?" and on my speaking in high terms, answered, that "he had been to dine with his friend the Duke, that some conversation had passed on the subject, he was afraid it was not the thing, it was not the true *sostenuto* style; but as I had written the article" (holding my peroration on the Beggar's Opera carelessly in his hand) "it might pass!" I could perceive that the rogue licked his lips at it, and had already in imagination "bought golden opinions of all sorts of people" by this very criticism, and I had the satisfaction the next day to meet Miss Stephens coming out of the Editor's

room, who had been to thank him for his very flattering account of her.

I was sent to see Kean the first night of his performance in Shylock, when there were about a hundred people in the pit, but from his masterly and spirited delivery of the first striking speech, "On such a day you called me dog," &c., I perceived it was a hollow thing. So it was given out in the Chronicle, but Perry was continually at me as other people were at him, and was afraid it would not last. It was to no purpose I said *it would last:* yet I am in the right hitherto. It has been said, ridiculously, that Mr. Kean was written up in the Chronicle. I beg leave to state my opinion that no actor can be written up or down by a paper. An author may be puffed into notice, or damned by criticism, because his book may not have been read. An artist may be over-rated, or undeservedly decried, because the public is not much accustomed to see or judge of pictures. But an actor is judged by his peers, the play-going public, and must stand or fall by his own merits or defects. The critic may give the tone or have a casting voice where popular opinion is divided; but he can no more *force* that opinion either way, or wrest it from its base in common-sense and feeling, than he can move Stonehenge. Mr. Kean had, however, physical disadvantages and strong prejudices to encounter, and so far the *liberal* and *independent* part of the press might have been of service in helping him to his seat in the public favor. May he long keep it with dignity and firmness!*

It was pretended by the Covent-garden people, and some others at the time, that Mr. Kean's popularity was a mere effect of love of novelty, a nine days' wonder, like the rage after Master Betty's acting, and would be as soon over. The comparison did not

* I cannot say how in this respect it might have fared if a Mr. M———, a fat gentleman, who might not have "liked yon lean and hungry Roscius," had continued in the theatrical department of Mr. Perry's paper at the time of this actor's first appearance; but I had been put upon this duty just before, and afterwards Mr. M———'s *spare* talents were not in much request. This, I believe, is the reason why he takes pains every now and then to inform the readers of the *Courier* that it is impossible for any one to understand a word that I write.

hold. Master Betty's acting was so far wonderful, and drew crowds to see it as a mere singularity, because he was a boy. Mr. Kean was a grown man, and there was no rule or precedent established in the ordinary course of nature why some other man should not appear in tragedy as great as John Kemble. Farther, Master Betty's acting was a singular phenomenon, but it was also as beautiful as it was singular. I saw him in the part of Douglas, and he seemed almost like "some gay creature of the element," moving about gracefully, with all the flexibility of youth, and murmuring Æolian sounds with plaintive tenderness. I shall never forget the way in which he repeated the line in which Young Norval says, speaking of the fate of two brothers:

"And in my mind happy was he that died!"

The tone fell and seemed to linger prophetic on my ear. Perhaps the wonder was made greater than it was. Boys at that age can often read remarkably well, and certainly are not without natural grace and sweetness of voice. The Westminster schoolboys are a better company of comedians than we find at most of our theatres. As to the understanding a part like Douglas, at least, I see no difficulty on that score. I myself used to recite the speech in Enfield's Speaker with good emphasis and discretion when at school, and entered, about the same age, into the wild sweetness of the sentiments in Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest, I am sure, quite as much as I should do now. Yet the same experiment has been often tried since, and has uniformly failed.*

* I (not very long ago) had the pleasure of spending an evening with Mr. Betty, when we had some "good talk" about the good old times of acting. I wanted to insinuate that I had been a sneaking admirer, but could not bring it in. As, however, we were putting on our great coats down stairs, I ventured to break the ice by saying, "There is one actor of that period of whom we have not made honorable mention, I mean Master Betty." "Oh!" he said, "I have forgot all that." I replied that he might, but that I could not forget the pleasure I had had in seeing him. On which he turned off, and shaking his sides heartily, and with no measured demand upon his lungs, called out, "Oh, memory! memory!" in a way that showed he felt the full force of the allusion. I found afterwards that the subject did not offend, and we were to have drunk some Burton ale together the following

It was soon after this that Coleridge returned from Italy, and he got one day into a long *tirade* to explain what a ridiculous farce the whole was, and how all the people abroad were shocked at the *gullibility* of the English nation, who on this and every other occasion were open to the artifices of all sorts of quacks, wondering how any persons with the smallest pretensions to common sense could for a moment suppose that a boy could act the characters of men without any of their knowledge, their experience, or their passions. We made some faint resistance, but in vain. The discourse then took a turn, and Coleridge began a labored eulogy on some promising youth, the son of an English artist, whom he had met in Italy, and who had wandered all over the Campagna with him, whose talents, he assured us, were the admiration of all Rome, and whose early designs had almost all the grace and purity of Raphael's. At last, some one interrupted the endless theme by saying a little impatiently, "Why just now you would not let us believe our own eyes and ears about young Betty, because you have a theory against premature talents, and now you start a boy phenomenon, that nobody knows anything about but yourself—a young artist that, you tell us, is to rival Raphael!" The truth is, we like to have something to admire ourselves, as well as to make other people gape and stare at; but then it must be a discovery of our own, an idol of our own making and setting up:—if others stumble on the discovery before us, or join in crying it up to the skies, we then set to work to prove that this a vulgar delusion, and show our sagacity and freedom from prejudice by pulling it in pieces with all the coolness imaginable. Whether we blow the bubble or crush it in our hands, vanity and the desire of empty distinction are generally at the bottom of our sanguine credulity or fastidious scepticism. There are some who always fall in with the fashionable prejudice as others affect singularity of opinion on all such points, according as they think they have more or less wit to judge for themselves.

If a little varnishing and daubing, a little puffing and quacking, and giving yourself a good name, and getting a friend to speak a word for you, is excusable in any profession, it is, I think, in that

evening, but were prevented. I hope he will consider that the engagement still stands good.

of painting. Painting is an occult science, and requires a little ostentation and mock-gravity in the professor. A man may here rival Katterfelto, "with his hair on end at his own wonders, wondering for his bread;" for, if he does not, he may in the end go without it. He may ride on a high trotting horse, in green spectacles, and attract notice to his person any how he can, if he only works hard at his profession. If "it only is when he is *out* he is acting," let him make the fools stare, but give others something worth looking at. Good Mr. Carver and Gilder, good Mr. Printer's Devil, good Mr. Bill-sticker, "do me your offices" unmolested! Painting is a plain ground, and requires a great many heraldic quarterings and facings to set it off. Lay on, and do not spare. No man's merit can be fairly judged of, if he is not known; and how can he be known, if he keeps entirely in the back ground?* A great name in art goes but a little way, is chilled as it creeps along the surface of the world, without something to revive and make it blaze out with fresh splendor. Fame is here almost obscurity. It is long before your name affixed to a sterling design will be spelt out by an undiscerning, regardless public. Have it proclaimed, therefore, as a necessary precaution, by sound of trumpet at the corners of the street, let it be stuck as a label in your mouth, carry it on a placard at your back. Otherwise, the world will never trouble themselves about you, or will very soon forget you. A celebrated artist of the present day, whose name is engraved at the bottom of some of the most touching specimens of English art, once had a frame-maker call on him, who, on entering his room, exclaimed with some surprise, "What, are you a painter, sir?" The other made answer, a little startled in his turn, "Why, didn't you know that? Did you never see my name at the bottom of prints?" He could not recollect that he had. "And yet you sell picture-frames and prints?" "Yes." "What painters' names then did he recollect: Did he know West's?" "Oh! yes." "And Opie's?" "Yes." "And Fuseli's?" "Oh! yes." "But you never

* Sir Joshua, who was not a vain man, purchased a tawdry sheriff's carriage, soon after he took his house in Leicester-fields, and desired his sister to ride about in it, in order that people might ask, "Whose it was?" and the answer would be, "It belongs to the great painter!"

heard of me?" "I cannot say that I ever did!" It was plain, from this conversation, that Mr. X——— had not kept company enough with picture-dealers and newspaper critics. On another occasion, a country-gentleman, who was sitting to him for his portrait, asked him if he had any pictures in the Exhibition at Somerset-house, and on his replying in the affirmative, desired to know what they were. He mentioned among others, "The Marriage of two Children;" on which the gentleman expressed great surprise, and said that was the very picture his wife was always teasing him to go and have another look at, though he had never noticed the painter's name. When the public are so eager to be amused, and care so little who it is that amuses them, it is not amiss to remind them of it now and then; or even to have a starling taught to repeat the name, to which they owe such misprized obligations, in their drowsy ears. On any other principle, I cannot conceive how painters (not without genius or industry) can fling themselves at the head of the public in the manner they do, having lives written of themselves, busts made of themselves, prints stuck in the shop-windows of themselves, and their names placed in "the first row of the rubric," with those of Rubens, Raphael, and Michael Angelo, swearing by themselves or their proxies that these glorified spirits would do well to leave the abodes of the blest in order to stand in mute wonder and with uplifted hands before some production of theirs, which is yet hardly dry! Oh! whatever you do, leave that string untouched. It will jar the rash and unhallowed hand that meddles with it. Profane not the mighty dead by mixing them up with the uncanonized living. Leave yourself a reversion in immortality, beyond the noisy clamor of the day. Do not quite lose your respect for public opinion by making it in all cases a palpable cheat, the echo of your own lungs that are hoarse with calling on the world to admire. Do not think to bully posterity, or to cozen your contemporaries. Be not always anticipating the effect of your picture on the town—think more about deserving success than commanding it. In issuing so many promissory notes upon the bank of fame, do not forget you have to pay in sterling gold. Believe that there is something in the pursuit of high art, beyond the manufacture of a paragraph or the collection of receipts at the door of

an exhibition. Venerate art as art. Study the works of others, and inquire into those of nature. Gaze at beauty. Become great by great efforts, and not by pompous pretensions. Do not think the world was blind to merit before your time, nor make the reputation of great geniuses the stalking horse to your vanity. You have done enough to insure yourself attention: you have now only to do something to deserve it, and to make good all that you have aspired to do!

There is a silent and systematic assumption of superiority which is as barefaced and unprincipled an imposture as the most impudent puffing. You may, by a tacit or avowed censure on all other arts, on all works of art, on all other pretensions, tastes, talents, but your own, produce a complete ostracism in the world of intellect, and leave yourself and your own performances alone standing, a mighty monument in an universal waste and wreck of genius. By cutting away the rude block and removing the rubbish from around it, the idol may be effectually exposed to view, placed on its pedestal of pride, without any other assistance. This method is more inexcusable than the other. For there is no egotism or vanity so hateful as that which strikes at our satisfaction in everything else, and derives its nourishment from preying, like the vampyre, on the carcase of others' reputation. I would rather, in a word, that a man should talk for ever of himself with vapid senseless assurance, than preserve a malignant, heartless silence, when the merit of a rival is mentioned. I have seen instances of both, and can judge pretty well between them.

There is no great harm in putting forward one's own pretensions (of whatever kind) if this does not bear a sour, malignant aspect towards others. Every one sets himself off to the best advantage he can, and tries to steal a march upon public opinion. In this sense, too, "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Life itself is a piece of harmless quackery. A great house over your head is of no use but to announce the great man within. Dress, equipage, title, livery-servants, are only so many quack advertisements and assumptions of the question of merit. The star that glitters at the breast would be worth nothing but as a badge of personal distinction: and the crown itself is but a symbol of the virtues, which the pos-

sessor inherits from a long line of illustrious ancestors! How much honor and honesty have been forfeited to be graced with a title or a ribbon; how much genius and worth have sunk to the grave, without an escutcheon and without an epitaph!

As men of rank and fortune keep lacqueys to reinforce their claims to self-respect, so men of genius sometimes surround themselves with a *coterie* of admirers to increase their reputation with the public. These *proneurs*, or satellites, repeat all their good things, laugh loud at all their jokes, and remember all their oracular decrees. They are their shadows and echoes. They talk of them in all companies, and bring back word of all that has been said about them. They hawk the good qualities of their patrons, as shopmen and *barkers* tease you to buy goods. I have no notion of this vanity at second-hand; nor can I see how this servile testimony from inferiors ("some followers of mine own") can be a proof of merit. It may soothe the ear; but that it should impose on the understanding, I own surprises me: yet there are persons who cannot exist without a *cortége* of this kind about them, in which they smiling read the opinion of the world, in the midst of all sorts of rancorous abuse and hostility, as Otho called for his mirror in the Illyrian field. One good thing is, that this evil, in some degree, cures itself; and when a man has been nearly ruined by a herd of these sycophants, he finds them leaving him, like thriftless dependents, for some more eligible situation, carrying away with them all the tattle they can pick up, and some left-off suit of finery. The same proneness to adulation which made them lick the dust before one idol, makes them bow as low to the rising Sun; they are as lavish of detraction as they were prurient with praise; and the *protegé* and admirer of the editor of the ——— figures in Blackwood's train. The man is a lacquey, and it is of little consequence whose livery he wears!

I would advise those who volunteer the office of puffing, to go the whole length of it. No half-measures will do. Lay it on thick and three-fold, or not at all. If you are once harnessed into that vehicle, it will be in vain for you to think of stopping. You must drive to the devil at once. The mighty Tamburlane, to whose car you are yoked, cries out

"Halloa, you pamper'd jades of Asia,
Can you not drive but twenty miles a day?"

He has you on the hip, for you have pledged your taste and judgment to his genius. Never fear but he will drive this wedge. If you are once screwed into such a machine, you must extricate yourself by main force. No hyperboles are too much: any drawback, any admiration on this side idolatry, is high treason. It is an unpardonable offence to say that the last production of your patron is not so good as the one before it; or that a performer shines more in one character than another. I remember once hearing a player declare that he never looked into any newspapers or magazines on account of the abuse that was always levelled at himself in them, though there were not less than three persons in company, who made it their business through these conduit-pipes of fame to "cry him up to the top of the compass." This sort of expectation is a little *exigéante!*

One fashionable mode of acquiring reputation is by patronising it. This may be from various motives, real good nature, good taste, vanity, or pride. I shall only speak of the spurious ones in this place. The quack and the *would-be* patron are well met. The house of the latter is a sort of curiosity shop or *menagerie*, where all sorts of intellectual pretenders and grotesques, musical children, arithmetical prodigies, occult philosophers, lecturers, *accoucheurs*, apes, chemists, fiddlers, and buffoons are to be seen for the asking, and are shown to the company for nothing. The folding-doors are thrown open, and display a collection that the world cannot parallel again. There may be a few persons of common sense and established reputation, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, otherwise it is a mere scramble or lottery. The professed encourager of *virth* and letters, being disappointed of the great names, sends out into the highways for the halt, the lame, and the blind, for all who pretend to distinction, defects, and obliquities, for all the disposable vanity or affectation floating on the town, in hopes that, among so many oddities, chance may bring some jewel or treasure to his door, which he may have the good fortune to appropriate in some way to his own use, or the credit of displaying to others. The art is to encourage rising genius—to bring forward doubtful and unnoticed merit. You thus get a

set of novices and raw pretenders about you, whose actual productions do not interfere with your self-love, and whose future efforts may reflect credit on your singular sagacity and faculty for finding out talent in the germ; and in the next place, by having them completely in your power, you are at liberty to dismiss them whenever you will, and to supply the deficiency by a new set of wondering, unwashed faces, in a rapid succession; an "aiery of children," embryo actors, artists, poets, or philosophers. Like unfledged birds they are hatched, nursed, and fed by hand; this gives room for a vast deal of management, meddling, care, and condescending solicitude, but the instant the callow brood are fledged, they are driven from the nest, and forced to shift for themselves in the wide world. One sterling production decides the question between them and their patrons, and from that time they become the property of the public. Thus a succession of importunate, hungry, idle, over-weening candidates for fame, are encouraged by these fickle keepers, only to be betrayed, and left to starve or beg, or pine in obscurity, while the man of merit and respectability is neglected, discountenanced, and stigmatized, because he will not lend himself as a tool to this system of splendid imposition, or pamper the luxury and weaknesses of the Vulgar Great. When a young artist is too independent to subscribe to the dogmas of his superiors, or fulfils their predictions and prognostics of wonderful contingent talent too soon, so as to get out of leading strings, and lean on public opinion for partial support, exceptions are taken to his dress, dialect, or manners, and he is expelled the circle with a character for ingratitude and treachery. None can procure toleration long but those who do not contradict the opinions, or excite the jealousy of their betters. One independent step is an appeal from them to the public, their natural and hated rivals, and annuls the contract between them, which implies ostentatious countenance on the one part, and servile submission on the other. But enough of this.

The patronage of men of talent, even when it proceeds from vanity, is often carried on with a spirit of generosity and magnificence, as long as these are in difficulties and a state of dependence: but as the principle of action in this case is a love of power, the complacency in the object of friendly regard ceases

with the opportunity or necessity for the same manifest display of power; and when the unfortunate *protegé* is just coming to land, and expects a last helping hand, he is, to his surprise, pushed back, in order that he may be saved from drowning once more. You are not hauled ashore, as you had supposed, by these kind friends, as a mutual triumph after all your struggles and their exertions in your behalf. It is a piece of presumption in you to be seen walking on *terra-firma*: you are required, at the risk of their friendship, to be always swimming in troubled waters, that they may have the credit of throwing out ropes, and sending out life-boats to you, without ever bringing you ashore. Your successes, your reputation, which you would think would please them, as justifying their good opinion, are coldly received and looked at askance, because they remove your dependence on them: if you are under a cloud, they do all they can to keep you there by their good-will; they are so sensible of your gratitude that they wish your obligations never to cease, and take care you shall owe no one else a good turn; and provided you are compelled or contented to remain always in poverty, obscurity, and disgrace, they will continue your very good friends and humble servants to command, to the end of the chapter. The tenure of these indentures is hard. Such persons will wilfully forfeit the gratitude created by years of friendship, by refusing to perform the last act of kindness that is likely ever to be demanded of them; will lend you money, if you have no chance of repaying them; will give you their good word, if nobody will believe it; and the only thing they do not forgive is an attempt or probability on your part, of being able to repay your obligations. There is something disinterested in all this: at least, it does not show a cowardly or mercenary disposition, but it savors too much of arrogance and arbitrary pretension. It throws a damning light on this question to consider who are mostly the subjects of the patronage of the great, and in the habit of receiving cards of invitation to splendid dinners. I confess, for one, I am not on the list; at which I do not grieve much, nor wonder at all. Authors, in general, are not in much request. Dr. Johnson was asked why he was not more frequently invited; and he said, "Because great lords and ladies do not like to have their

mouths stopped." Garrick was not in this predicament: he could amuse the company in the drawing-room by imitating the great moralist and lexicographer, and make the negro boy, in the court-yard, die with laughing to see him take off the swelling airs and strut of the turkey-cock. This was clever and amusing, but it did not involve an opinion, it did not lead to a difference of sentiment, in which the owner of the house might be found in the wrong. Players, singers, dancers, are hand and glove with the great. They embellish, and have an *éclat* in their names, but do not come into collision. Eminent portrait painters, again, are tolerated, because they come into personal contact with the great: and sculptors hold equality with lords when they have a certain quantity of solid marble in their workshops to answer for the solidity of their pretensions. People of fashion and property must have something to show for their patronage, something visible or tangible. A sentiment is a visionary thing; an argument may lead to dangerous consequences, and those who are likely to broach either one or the other, are not, therefore, fit for good company in general. Poets, and men of genius, who find their way there, soon find their way out. They are not of *that ilk*, with some exceptions. Painters who come in contact with majesty get on by servility or buffoonery, by letting themselves down in some way. Sir Joshua was never a favorite at court. He kept too much at a distance. Beechey gained a vast deal of favor by familiarity, and lost it by taking too great freedoms.* West ingratiated himself in the same quarter by means of practices as little creditable to himself as his august employer, namely, by playing the hypocrite, and professing sentiments the reverse of those he naturally felt. Kings (I know not how justly) have been said to be lovers of low company, and low conversation. They are

* Sharp became a great favorite of the king on the following occasion. It was the custom, when the king went through the lobbies of the palace, for those who preceded him to cry out, "Sharp, sharp, look sharp." Mr. Sharp, who was waiting in a room just by (preparing some colors), hearing his name repeated so urgently, ran out in great haste, and came up with all his force against the king, who was passing the door at the time. The young artist was knocked down in the encounter, and the attendants were in the greatest consternation; but the king laughed heartily at the adventure, and took great notice of the unfortunate subject of it from that time forward

also said to be fond of dirty practical jokes. If the fact is so, the reason is as follows. From the elevation of their rank, aided by pride and flattery, they look down on the rest of mankind, and would not be thought to have all their advantages for nothing. They wish to maintain the same precedence in private life that belongs to them as a matter of outward ceremony. This pretension they cannot keep up by fair means; for in wit or argument they are not superior to the common run of men. They therefore answer a repartee by a practical joke, which turns the laugh against others, and cannot be retaliated with safety. That is, they avail themselves of the privilege of their situation to take liberties, and degrade those about them, as they can only keep up the idea of their own dignity by proportionably lowering their company.

ESSAY XXXII.

On the Picturesque and Ideal. A Fragment.

The natural in visible objects is whatever is ordinarily presented to the senses; the picturesque is that which stands out, and catches the attention by some striking peculiarity: the *ideal* is that which answers to the preconceived imagination and appetite in the mind for love and beauty. The picturesque depends chiefly on the principle of discrimination or contrast; the *ideal* on harmony and continuity of effect: the one surprises, the other satisfies the mind; the one starts off from a given point, the other reposes on itself; the one is determined by an excess of form, the other by a concentration of feeling.

The picturesque may be considered as something like an excrescence on the face of nature. It runs imperceptibly into the fantastical and grotesque. Fairies and satyrs are picturesque; but they are scarcely *ideal*. They are an extreme and unique conception of a certain thing, but not of what the mind delights in, or broods fondly over. The image created by the artist's hand is not moulded and fashioned by the love of good and yearning after grace and beauty, but rather the contrary: that is, they are ideal deformity, not ideal beauty. Rubens was perhaps the most picturesque of painters; but he was almost the least *ideal*. So Rembrandt was (out of sight) the most picturesque of colorists; as Correggio was the most *ideal*. In other words, his composition of light and shade is more a whole, more in unison, more blended into the same harmonious feeling than Rembrandt's, who staggers by contrast, but does not soothe by gradation. Correggio's forms, indeed, had a picturesque air; for they often incline (even when most beautiful) to the quaintness of caricature. Vandyke, I think, was at once the least picturesque and least *ideal* of all the great painters. He was purely natural, and neither selected from outward

forms nor added anything from his own mind. He owes everything to perfect truth, clearness and transparency; and though his productions certainly arrest the eye, and strike in a room full of pictures, it is from the contrast they present to other pictures, and from being stripped quite naked of all artificial advantages. They strike almost as a piece of white paper would, hung up in the same situation.—I began with saying that whatever stands out from a given line, and as it were projects upon the eye, is picturesque; and this holds true (comparatively) in form and color. A rough terrier-dog, with the hair bristled and matted together, is picturesque. As we say, there is a decided character in it, a marked determination to an extreme point. A shock-dog is odd and disagreeable, but there is nothing picturesque in its appearance: it is a mere mass of flimsy confusion. A goat with projecting horns and pendent beard is a picturesque animal: a sheep is not. A horse is only picturesque from opposition of color; as in Mr. Northcote's study of Gadshill, where the white horse's head coming against the dark scowling face of the man makes as fine a contrast as can be imagined. An old stump of a tree with rugged bark, and one or two straggling branches, a little stunted hedge-row line, marking the boundary of the horizon, a stubble-field, a winding path, a rock seen against the sky, are picturesque, because they have all of them prominence and a distinctive character of their own. They are not objects (to borrow Shakspeare's phrase) "of no mark or likelihood." A country may be beautiful, romantic, or sublime, without being picturesque. The Lakes in the North of England are not picturesque, though certainly the most interesting sight in this country. To be a subject for painting, a prospect must present sharp striking points of view or singular forms, or one object must relieve and set off another. There must be distinct stages and salient points for the eye to rest upon or start from, in its progress over the expanse before it. The distance of a landscape will oftentimes look flat or heavy, that the trunk of a tree or a ruin in the foreground would immediately throw into perspective and turn to air. Rembrandt's landscapes are the least picturesque in the world, except from the strait lines and sharp angles, the deep incision and dragging of his pencil, like a harrow over the ground, and the broad

contrast of earth and sky. Earth, in his copies, is rough and hairy; and Pan has struck his hoof against it! A camel is a picturesque ornament in a landscape or a history-piece. This is not merely from its romantic and oriental character; for an elephant has not the same effect, and if introduced as a necessary appendage, is also an unwieldy incumbrance. A negro's head in a group is picturesque from contrast: so are the spots on a panther's hide. This was the principle that Paul Veronese went upon, who said the rule for composition was *black upon white and white upon black*. He was a pretty good judge. His celebrated picture of the Marriage of Cana is in all likelihood the completest piece of workmanship extant in the art. When I saw it, it nearly covered one side of a large room in the Louvre (being itself forty feet by twenty)—and it seemed as if that side of the apartment was thrown open, and you looked out at the open sky, at buildings, marble pillars, galleries with people in them, emperors, female slaves, Turks, negroes, musicians, all the famous painters of the time, the tables loaded with viands, goblets, and dogs under them—a sparkling, overwhelming confusion, a bright, unexpected reality—the only fault you could find was that no miracle was going on in the faces of the spectators: the only miracle there was the picture itself! A French gentleman, who showed me this "triumph of painting" (as it has been called), perceiving I was struck with it, observed, "My wife admires it exceedingly for the facility of the execution." I took this proof of sympathy for a compliment. It is said that when Humboldt, the celebrated traveller and naturalist, was introduced to Buonaparte, the Emperor addressed him in these words—"*Vous aimez la botanique, Monsieur*"—and on the other's replying in the affirmative, added "*Et ma femme aussi!*" This has been found fault with as a piece of brutality and insolence in the great man by bigoted critics, who do not know what a thing it is to get a Frenchwoman to agree with them in any point. For my part, I took the observation as it was meant, and it did not put me out of conceit with myself or the picture that Madame M—— liked it as well as *Monsieur l'Anglois*. Certainly, there could be no harm in that. By the side of it happened to be hung two allegorical pictures of

Rubens (and in such matters he too was "no baby"*)—I don't remember what the figures were, but the texture seemed of wool or cotton. The texture of the Paul Veronese was not wool or cotton, but stuff, jewels, flesh, marble, air, whatever composed the essence of the varied subjects, in endless relief and truth of handling. If the Fleming had seen his two allegories hanging where they did, he would, without a question, have wished them far enough. I imagine that Rubens's landscapes are picturesque: Claude's are *ideal*. Rubens is always in extremes: Claude in the middle. Rubens carries some one peculiar quality or feature of nature to the utmost verge of probability: Claude balances and harmonizes different forms and masses with labored delicacy, so that nothing falls short, no one thing overpowers another. Rainbows, showers, partial gleams of sunshine, moonlight, are the means with which Rubens produces his most gorgeous and enchanting effects: there are neither rainbows, nor showers, nor sudden bursts of sunshine, nor glittering moon-beams in Claude. He is all softness and proportion; the other is all smart and brilliant excess. The two sides (for example) of one of Claude's landscapes balance one another, as in a scale of beauty; in Rubens the several objects are grouped and thrown together with capricious wantonness. Claude has more repose: Rubens more gaiety and extravagance. And here it might be asked, Is a rainbow a picturesque or an *ideal* object? It seems to me to be both. It is an accident in nature; but it is an inmate of the fancy. It startles and surprises the sense, but it soothes and tranquillizes the spirit. It makes the eye glisten to behold it, but the mind turns to it long after it has faded from its place in the sky. It has both properties then of giving an extraordinary impulse to the mind by the singularity of its appearance, and of riveting the imagination by its intrinsic beauty. I may just notice here in passing, that I think the effect of moon-light is treated in an *ideal* manner in the well-known line in Shakspeare–

"See how the moonlight *sleeps* upon yon bank!"

The image is heightened by the exquisiteness of the expression

* "And surely Mandricardo was no baby."—Harrington's Ariosto.

beyond its natural beauty, and it seems as if there could be no end to the delight taken in it. A number of sheep coming to a pool of water to drink, with shady trees in the back-ground, the rest of the flock following them, and the shepherd and his dog left carelessly behind, is surely the *ideal* in landscape-composition, if the *ideal* has its source in the interest excited by a subject, in its power of drawing the affections after it linked in a golden chain, and in the desire of the mind to dwell on it for ever. The *ideal*, in a word, is the height of the pleasing, that which satisfies and accords with the inmost longing of the soul: the picturesque is merely a sharper and bolder impression of reality. A morning mist drawing a slender veil over all objects is at once picturesque and *ideal;* for it in the first place excites immediate surprise and admiration, and in the next a wish for it to continue, and a fear lest it should be too soon dissipated. Is the Cupid riding on a lion in the ceiling at Whitehall, and urging him with a spear over a precipice, with only clouds and sky beyond, most picturesque or *ideal?* It has every effect of startling contrast and situation, and yet inspires breathless expectation and wonder for the event. Rembrandt's Jacob's Dream, again, is both—fearful to the eye, but realizing that loftiest vision of the soul. Take two faces in Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, the Judas and the St. John; the one is all strength, repulsive character, the other is all divine grace and mild sensibility. The individual, the characteristic in painting, is that *which is* in a marked manner—the *ideal* is that which we wish anything to be, and to contemplate without measure and without end. The first is truth, the last is good. The one appeals to the sense and understanding, the other to the will and the affections. The truly beautiful and grand attracts the mind to it by instinctive harmony, is absorbed in it, and nothing can ever part them afterwards. Look at a Madonna of Raphael's: what gives the *ideal* character to the expression,—the insatiable purpose of the soul, or its measureless content in the object of its contemplation? A portrait of Vandyke's is mere indifference and still-life in the comparison: it has not in it the principle of growing and still unsatisfied desire. In the *ideal* there is no fixed stint or limit but the limit of possibility: it is the infinite with respect to human capacities and wishes. Love is

for this reason an *ideal* passion. We give to it our all of hope, of fear, of present enjoyment, and stake our last chance of happiness wilfully and desperately upon it. A good authority puts into the mouth of one of his heroines—

> "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep!"—

How many fair catechumens will there be found in all ages to repeat as much after Shakspeare's Juliet!

ESSAY XXXIII.

The Main Chance.

"Search then the ruling passion: there alone
The wild are constant, and the cunning known,
The fool consistent, and the false sincere:
This clue once found unravels all the rest,
The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest."—POPE.

I AM one of those who do not think that mankind are exactly governed by reason or a cool calculation of consequences. I rather believe that habit, imagination, sense, passion, prejudice, words, make a strong and frequent diversion from the right line of prudence and wisdom. I have been told, however, that these are merely the irregularities and exceptions, and that reason forms the rule or basis; that the understanding, instead of being the sport of the capricious and arbitrary decisions of the will, generally dictates the line of conduct it is to pursue, and that self-interest or the *main chance* is the unvarying load-star of our affections or the chief ingredient in all our motives, that thrown in as ballast gives steadiness and direction to our voyage through life. I will not take upon me to give a verdict in this cause as judge; but I will try to plead one side of it as an advocate, perhaps a biased and feeble one.

As the passions are to be subject to the control of reason, and as reason is resolved (in the present case) into an attention to our own interest or a practical sense of the value of money, it will not be amiss to inquire how much of this principle itself is founded in a rational estimate of things or is calculated for the end it proposed, or how much of it will turn out (when analysed) to be mere madness and folly, or a mixture, like all the rest, of obstinacy, whim, fancy, vanity, ill-nature, and so forth, or a nominal pursuit of good. This passion or an inordinate love of wealth shows

itself, when it is strong, equally in two opposite ways, in saving or in spending, avarice (or stinginess) and in extravagance. To examine each of their order. That lowest and most familiar form of covetousness, commonly called *stinginess*, is at present (it must be owned) greatly on the wane in civilized society ; it has been driven out of fashion either by ridicule and good sense, or by the spread of luxury, or by supplying the mind with other sources of interest, besides those which relate to the bare means of subsistence, so that it may almost be considered as a vice or absurdity struck off the list as a set off to some that in the change of manners and the progress of dissipation have been brought upon the stage. It is not, however, so entirely banished from the world, but that examples of it may be found to our purpose. It seems to have taken refuge in the petty provincial towns or in old baronial castles in the north of Scotland, where it is still triumphant. To go into this subject somewhat in detail. What is more common in these places than to stint the servants in their wages, to allowance them in the merest necessaries, never to indulge them with a morsel of savory food, and to lock up everything from them as if they were thieves or common vagabonds broke into the house ? The natural consequence is that the mistresses live in continual *hot water* with their servants, keep watch and ward over them—the pantry being in a state of siege—grudge them every mouthful, every appearance of comfort or moment of leisure, and torment their own souls every minute of their lives about what if left wholly to itself would not make a difference of five shillings at the year's end. There are families so notorious for this kind of *surveillance* and meanness, that no servant will go to live with them ; for to clench the matter, they are obliged to stay if they do, as under these amiable establishments and to provide against an evasion of their signal advantages, domestics are never hired but by the half-year. Cases have been known where servants have taken a pleasant revenge on their masters and mistresses without intending it : where the example of sordid saving and meanness having possession of those who in the first instance were victims to it, they have conscientiously applied it to the benefit of all parties, and scarcely suffered a thing to enter the house for the whole six months they stayed in it. To pass over, however,

those cases which may plead poverty as their excuse, what shall we say to a lady of fortune (the sister of an old-fashioned Scotch laird) allowing the fruit to rot in the gardens and hot-houses of a fine old mansion in large quantities sooner than let any of it be given away in presents to the neighbors, and when peremptorily ordered by the master of the house to send a basket-full every morning to a sick friend, purchasing a small pottle for the purpose, and satisfying her mind (an intelligent and well-informed one) with this miserable subterfuge? Nay farther, the same person, whenever they had green peas or other rarities served up at table, could hardly be prevailed on to help the guests to them, but if possible sent them away, though no other use could now be made of them, and she would never see them again! Is there common sense in this; or is it not more like madness? But is it not, at the same time, human nature? Let us stop to explain a little. In my view, the real motive of action in this and other similar cases of grasping penuriousness has no more reference to self-love (properly so called) than artificial fruit and flowers have to natural ones. A certain form or outside appearance of utility may deceive the mind, but natural, pulpy, wholesome, nutritious substance, the principle of vitality is gone. To this callous, frigid habit of mind the real uses of things harden and crystallize; the pith and marrow are extracted out of them, leaving nothing but the husk or shell. By a regular process, the idea of property is gradually abstracted from the advantage it may be of even to ourselves; and to a well-drilled, thorough-bred Northern housekeeper (such as I have spoken of) the fruits or other produce of her garden would come at last to be things no more to be eaten or enjoyed than her jewels or trinkets, which are professedly of no use but to be *kept* as symbols of wealth, to be occasionally looked at, and carefully guarded from the approach of any unhallowed touch.

The calculation of consequences or of benefit to accrue to any living person is so far from being the main spring in this mechanical operation that it is never once thought of, or regarded with peevishness and impatience as an unwelcome intruder, because it must naturally divert the mind from the warped and false bias it has taken. The feeling of property is here removed from the

sphere of practice to a chimerical and fictitious one. In the case of not sending the fruit out of the house, there might be some lurking idea of its being possibly wanted at home, that it might be sent to some one else, or made up into conserves: but when different articles of food are actually placed on the table, to hang back from using or offering them to others, is a deliberate infatuation. They *must be* destroyed, they *could not* appear again; and yet this person's heart failed her and shrank back from the only opportunity of making the proper use of them with a petty, sensitive apprehension, as if it were a kind of sacrilege done to a cherished and favorite object. The impulse to save was become by indulgence a sort of desperate propensity and forlorn hope, no longer the understood means, but the mistaken end: habit had completely superseded the exercise and control of reason, and the rage of making the most of everything *by making no use of it at all* resisted to the last moment the shocking project of feasting on a defenceless dish of green peas (that *would* fetch so much in the market) as an outrage against the Goddess of Stinginess and torture to the soul of Thrift! The principle of economy is inverted; and in order to avoid the possibility of wasting anything, the way with such philosophers and housewives is to abstain from touching it altogether. Is not this a common error? Or are we conscious of our motives in such cases? Or do we not flatter ourselves by imputing every such act of idle folly to the necessity of adopting some sure and judicious plan to shun ruin, beggary, and the profligate abuse of wealth? An old maid in the same northern school of humanity calling upon some young ladies, her neighbors, was so alarmed and scandalized at finding the *safe* open in their absence, that she engaged herself to drink tea the same afternoon, for the express purpose of reading them a lecture on the unheard-of-imprudence and impropriety of such an example, and was mobbed on her way home by the poor servant-girl (who had been made the subject of her declamation) in return for her uncalled-for interference. *She* had nothing to fear, nothing to lose: *her* safe was carefully locked up. Why then all this flutter, fidgetty anxiety, and itch of meddling? Out of pure romantic generosity—because the idea of anything like comfort or liberality to a servant shocked her economical and screwed-up prejudices

as much as the impugning any article of her religious or moral creed could have done. The very truisms and literal refinements of this passion are then sheer impertinence. The housekeeper came into the parlor of a "*big ha' house*," in the same land of cakes and hospitality, to say that the workmen had refused to eat their dinner.—"Why so?"—Because there was nothing but sowens and sour milk.—"Then they must go without a dinner," said the young mistress, delighted; "there is nothing else in the house for them." Yet the larder at that time groaned with cold rounds of beef, hams, pastries, and other plentiful remains of a huge entertainment the day before. This was flippancy and ill-nature, as well as a wrong notion of self-interest. Is it at all wonderful that a decent servant-girl, when applied to, to go to this place, laughed at the idea of a service where there was nothing to eat? Yet this attention to the *main chance* on her part, had it come to the lady's knowledge, would have been treated as a great piece of insolence. So little conception have such people of their own obligations or the claims of others!

The clergyman of the parish (prolific in this sort of anecdote), a hearty, good sort of man enough, but irritable withal, took it into his head to fly into a violent passion if ever he found the glasses or spoons left out in the kitchen, and he always went into the kitchen to look after this sort of excitement. He pretended to be mightily afraid that the one would be broken (to his irreparable loss) and the other stolen, though there was no danger of either: he wanted an excuse to fret and fume about something. On the death of his wife he sent for her most intimate friend to condole and consult with, and having made some necessary arrangements, begged as a peculiar favor that she would look into the kitchen to see if the glasses and silver spoons were in their places. She repressed a smile at such a moment out of regard to his feelings, which were serious and acute; but burst into a fit of unrestrained laughter as soon as she got home. So ridiculous a thing is human nature, even to ourselves! Either our actions are absurd or we are absurd, in our constant censure and exposure of others. I would not from choice go into these details, but I might be required to fill up a vague outline; and the examples of folly, spite,

and meanness are unfortunately "sown like a thick scurf o'er life!"

Let us turn the tables and look at the other side of this sober, solid, engrossing passion for property and its appendages. A man lays out a thousand, nay, sometimes several thousand pounds in purchasing a fine picture. This is thought by the vulgar a very fantastical folly and unaccountable waste of money. Why so? No one would give such a sum for a picture, unless there were others ready to offer nearly the same sum, and who are likely to appreciate its value and envy him the distinction. It is then a sign of taste, a proof of wealth to possess it; it is an ornament and a luxury. If the same person lays out the same sum of money in building or purchasing a fine house, or enriching it with costly furniture, no notice is taken. This is supposed to be perfectly natural and in order. Yet both are equally gratuitous pieces of extravagance, and the value of the objects is in either case equally *ideal*. It will be asked, "But what is the use of the picture?" And what, pray, is the use of the fine house or costly furniture unless to be looked at, to be admired, and to display the taste and magnificence of the owner? Are not pictures and statues as much furniture as gold plate or jasper tables; or does the circumstance of the former having a meaning in them and appealing to the imagination as well as to the senses, neutralize their virtue and render it entirely chimerical and visionary? It is true, every one must have a house of some kind, furnished somehow, and the superfluous so far grows imperceptibly out of the necessary. But a fine house, fine furniture is necessary to no man, nor of more value than the plainest, except as a matter of taste, of fancy, of luxury and ostentation. Again, no doubt, if a person is in the habit of keeping a number of servants, and entertaining a succession of fashionable guests, he must have more room than he wants for himself, apartments suitably decorated to receive them, and offices and stables for their horses and retinue. But is all this unavoidably dictated as a consequence of his attention to the *main chance*, or is it not sacrificing the latter and making it a stalking-horse to his vanity, dissipation, or love of society and hospitality?

We are at least as fond of spending money as of making it.

If a man runs through a fortune in the way here spoken of, is it out of love to himself? Yet who scruples to run through a fortune in this way, or accuses himself of any extraordinary disinterestedness or love of others? One bed is as much as any one can sleep in, one room is as much as he can dine in, and he may have another for study or to retire to after dinner; but he can only want more than this for the accommodation of his friends or the admiration of the stranger. At Fonthill Abbey (to take an extreme illustration) there was not a single room fit to sit, lie, or stand in: the whole was cut up into pigeon holes, or spread out into long endless galleries. The building this huge, ill-assorted pile cost, I believe, nearly a million of money; and if the circumstance was mentioned, it occasioned an expression of surprise at the amount of the wealth that had been thus squandered; but if it was said that a hundred pounds had been laid out on a highly finished picture, there was the same astonishment expressed at its misdirection. The sympathetic auditor makes up his mind to the first and greatest outlay, by reflecting that in case of the worst the building materials alone will fetch something considerable; for in the very idea of stone walls and mortar there is something solid and tangible, that repels the charge of frivolous levity or fine sentiment. This quaint excrescence in architecture, preposterous and ill-constructed as it was, occasioned, I suspect, many a heartache and bitter comparison to the throng of fashionable visitants; and I conceive it was the very want of comfort and convenience that enhanced this feeling, by magnifying as it were from contrast the expense that had been incurred in realizing an idle whim. When we judge thus perversely and invidiously of the employment of wealth by others, I cannot think that we are guided in our own choice of means to ends by a simple calculation of downright use and personal accommodation.

The gentleman who purchased Fonthill, and was supposed to be possessed of wealth enough to purchase half a dozen more Fonthills, lived there himself for some time in a state of the greatest retirement; rose at six, and read till four, rode out for an hour for the benefit of the air, and dined abstemiously for the sake of his health. I could do all this myself. What then became of the rest of his fortune? It was lying in the funds or embarked in

business to make it yet greater: that he might still rise at six and read till four, &c. It was of no other earthly use to him; for he did not wish to make a figure in the world, or to throw it away on studs of horses, or equipages, entertainments, gaming, electioneering, subscriptions to charitable institutions, mistresses, or any of the usual fashionable modes of squandering wealth for the amusement and wonder of others and our own fancied enjoyment. Mr. Farquhar did not probably lay out five hundred a-year on himself: yet it cost Mr. Beckford, who also led a life of perfect seclusion, twenty thousand a-year to defray the expenses of his table and of his household establishment. When I find that such and so various are the tastes of men, I am a little puzzled to know what is meant by self-interest, of which some persons talk so fluently, as if it was a *jack-in-a-box*, which they could take out and show you, and which they tell you is the object that all men equally aim at. If money, is it for its own sake, or the sake of other things? Is it to hoard it, or to spend it on ourselves or others? In all these points, we find the utmost diversity and contradiction, both of feeling and practice. Certainly he who puts his money into a strong box, and he who puts it into a dice-box, must be allowed to have a very different idea of the *main chance*. If by this phrase be understood a principle of self-preservation, I grant that while we live, we must not starve, and that *necessity has no law*. Beyond this point, all seems nearly left to chance or whim, and so far are all the world from being agreed in their definition of this redoubtable term, that one half of them may be said to think and act in diametrical opposition to the other.

Avarice is the miser's dream, as fame is the poet's. A calculation of physical profit or loss is almost as much out of the question in the one case as in the other. The one has set his mind on gold, the other on praise, as the *summum bonum* or object of his bigoted idolatry and daily contemplation, not for any private and sinister ends. It is the immediate pursuit, not the remote or reflex consequence that gives wings to the passion. There is indeed a reference to self in either case that fixes and concentrates it, but not a gross or sordid one. Is not the desire to accumulate and leave a vast estate behind us, equally romantic with the desire to leave a posthumous name behind us? Is not the desire of distinc-

tion, of something to be known and remembered by, the paramount consideration? And are not the privations we undergo, the sacrifices and exertions we make for either object nearly akin? A child makes a huge snow-ball to show his skill and perseverance, and as something to wonder at, not that he can swallow it as an ice, or warm his hands at it, and though the next day's sun will dissolve it; and the man accumulates a pile of wealth for the same reason principally, or to find employment for his time, his imagination, and his will. I deny that to watch and superintend the return of millions can be of any other use to him than to watch the returns of the heavenly bodies, or to calculate their distances, or to contemplate eternity, or infinity, or the sea, or the dome of St. Peter's, or any other object that excites curiosity and interest from its magnitude and importance. Do we not look at the most barren mountain with thrilling awe and wonder? And is it strange that we should gaze at a mountain of gold with satisfaction, when we can besides say, "This is ours, with all the power that belongs to it?" Every passion, however plodding or prosaic, has its poetical side. A miser is the true alchemist, the magician in his cell, who overlooks a mighty experiment, who sees dazzling visions, and who wields the will of others at his nod, but to whom all other hopes or pleasures are dead, and who is cut off from all connexion with his kind. He lives in a splendid hallucination, a walking trance, and so far it is well: but if he thinks he has any other need or use for all this endless store (any more than to swill the ocean) he deceives himself, and is no conjuror after all. He goes on, however, mechanically adding to his stock, and fancying that great riches is great gain, that every particle that swells the heap is something in reserve against the evil day, and a defence against that poverty which he dreads more the farther he is removed from it, as the more giddy the height to which we have attained, the more frightful does the gulph yawn below—so easily does habit get the mastery of reason, and so nearly is passion allied to madness!—But he is laying up for his heirs and successors:—in toiling for them, and sacrificing himself, is he properly attending to the *main chance?*

This is the turn the love of money takes in cautious, dry, recluse, and speculative minds. If it were the pure and abstract

love of money, it could take no other turn but this. But in a different class of characters, the sociable, the vain, and imaginative, it takes just the contrary one, *viz.* to expense, extravagance, and ostentation. It here loves to display itself in every fantastic shape and with every reflected lustre; in houses, in equipage, in dress, in a retinue of friends and dependents, in horses, in hounds—to glitter in the eye of fashion, to be echoed by the roar of folly, and buoyed up for a while like a bubble on the surface of vanity, to sink all at once and irrecoverably into an abyss of ruin and bankruptcy. Does it foresee this result? Does it care for it? What, then, becomes of the calculating principle, that can neither be hood-winked nor bribed from its duty? Does it do nothing for us in this critical emergency? It is blind, deaf, and insensible to all but the noise, confusion, and glare of objects by which it is fascinated and lulled into a fatal repose? One man ruins himself by the vanity of associating with lords, another by his love of low company; one by his fondness for building, another by his rage for keeping open house and private theatricals; one by philosophical experiments, and another by embarking in every ticklish and fantastical speculation that is proposed to him; one throws away an estate on a law-suit, another on a die, a third on a horse-race, a fourth on *virtu*, a fifth on a drab, a sixth on a contested election, &c. There is no dearth of instances to fill the page or complete the group of profound calculators, of inflexible martyrs to the *main chance*. Let any of these discreet and well advised persons have the veil torn from their darling follies by experience, and be gifted with a double share of wisdom and a second fortune to dispose of, and each of them, so far from being warned by experience or disaster, will only be the more resolutely bent to assert the independence of his choice and throw it away the self-same road the other went before,—on his vanity in associating with lords, on his love of low company, on his fondness for building, on his rage for keeping open house or private theatricals, on philosophical experiments, on fantastic speculations, on a law-suit, on a dice-box, on a favorite horse, on a picture, on a mistress, or election contest, and so on through the whole of the chapter of accidents and cross purposes. There is an admirable description of this sort of infatuation with folly and ruin in

Madame D'Arblay's account of Harrel in "Cecilia;" and though the picture is highly wrought and carried to the utmost length, yet I maintain that the principle is common. I myself have known more than one individual in the same predicament; and therefore cannot think that the deviations from the line of strict prudence and wisdom are so rare or trifling as the theory I am opposing represents them, or I must have been singularly unfortunate in my acquaintance. Out of a score of persons of this class I could mention several that have ruined their fortunes out of mere freak, others that are in a state of dotage and imbecility for fear of being robbed of all they are worth. The rest care nothing about the matter. So that this boasted and unfailing attention to the *main chance* resolves itself, when strong, into mad profusion or griping penury, or if weak, is null and yields to other motives. Such is the conclusion to which my observation of life has led me: if I am quite wrong, it is hard that in a world abounding in such characters, I should not have met with a single practical philosopher.*

A girl in a country town resolves never to marry any one under a duke or a lord. Good. This may be very well as an ebullition of spleen or vanity; but is there much common sense or regard to her own satisfaction in it? Were there any likelihood of her succeeding in her resolution, she would not make it; for it is the very distinction to be attained that piques her ambition, and leads her to gratify her conceit of herself by affecting to look down on any lower matches. Let her suffer ever so much

* Mr Bentham proposes to new-model the penal code on the principle of a cool and systematic calculation of consequences. Yet of all philosophers, the candidates for Panopticons and Penitentiaries are the most short-sighted and refractory. Punishment has scarcely any effect upon them. Thieves steal under the scaffold; and if a person's previous feelings and habits do not prevent his running the risk of the gallows, be assured that the fear of consequences or his having already escaped it with all the good resolutions he may have made on the occasion, will not prevent his exposing himself to it a second time. It is true most people have a natural aversion to being hanged. The perseverance of culprits in their evil courses seems a fatality, which is strengthened by the prospect of what is to follow. Mr Bentham argues, that all men act from calculation, "even madmen reason." So far it may be true that the world is not unlike a great Bedlam, or answers to the title of an old play—"A mad world my masters."

mortification or chagrin in the prosecution of her scheme, it only confirms her the more in it: the spirit of contradiction and the shame of owning herself defeated, increase with every new disappointment and every year of painful probation. At least this is the case while she chooses to think there is any chance left. But what, after all, is this haughty and ridiculous pretension founded on? Is it owing to a more commanding view and a firmer grasp of consequences, or of her own interest? No such thing: she is as much captivated by the fancied sound of "My Lady," and dazzled by the image of a coronet-coach, as the girl who marries a footman is smit with his broad shoulders, laced coat, and rosy cheeks. "But why must I be always in extremes? Few misses make vows of celibacy or marry their footmen." Take then the broad question:—Do they generally marry from the convictions of the understanding, or make the choice that is most likely to ensure their future happiness, or that they themselves approve afterwards? I think the answer must be in the negative; and yet love and marriage are among the weightiest and most serious concerns of life. Mutual regard, good temper, good sense, good character, or a conformity of tastes and dispositions, have notoriously and lamentably little to say in it. On the contrary, it is most frequently those things that pique and provoke opposition, instead of those which promise concord and sympathy, that decide the choice and inflame the will by the love of conquest, or of overcoming difficulty. Or it is a complexion, or a fine set of teeth, or air, or dress, or a fine person, or false calves, or affected consequence, or a reputation for gallantry, or a flow of spirits, or a flow of words, or forward coquetry, or assumed indifference,—something that appeals to the senses, the fancy, or to our pride, and determines us to throw away our happiness for life. Neither, then, in this case, on which so much depends, are the *main chance* and our real interest by any means the same thing.

> "Now all ye ladies of fair Scotland,
> And ladies of England that happy would prove,
> Marry never for houses, nor marry for land,
> Nor marry for nothing but only love."*—*Old Ballad.*

* "Have I not seen a household where love was not?" says the author of the "Betrothed:" "where, although there was worth and good will, and enough of the means of life, all was embittered by regrets, which were not

Or take the passion of love where it has other objects and consequences in view. Is reason any match for the poison of this passion, where it has been once imbibed? I might just as well be told that reason is a cure for madness or the bite of a venomous serpent. Are not health, fortune, friends, character, peace of mind, everything sacrificed in its idlest impulse? Are the instances rare, or are they not common and tragical? The *main chance* does not serve the turn here. Does the prospect of certain ruin break the fascination to its frail victim, or does it not render the conquest more easy and secure that the seducer has already triumphed over and deserted a hundred other victims? A man *à bonnes fortunes* is the most irresistible person in the lists of gallantry. Take drunkenness again, that vice which till within these few years (and even still) was fatal to the health, the constitution, the fortunes of so many thousands, and the peace of so many families in Great Britain. I would ask what remonstrance of friends, what lessons of experience, what resolutions of amendment, what certainty of remorse and suffering, however exquisite, would deter the confirmed sot (where the passion for this kind of excitement had once become habitual and the immediate want of it was felt) from indulging his propensity and taking his full swing, notwithstanding the severe and imminent punishment to follow upon his excess? The consequence of not abstaining from his favorite beverage is not doubtful and distant (a thing in the clouds) but close to his side, staring him in the face, and felt perhaps in all its aggravations that very morning, yet the recollection of this and of the next day's dawn is of no avail against the momentary craving and headlong impulse given by the first application of the glass to his lips. The present temptation is indeed heightened by the threatened alternative. I know this as a rule, that the stronger the repentance, the surer the relapse and the more hopeless the cure! The being engrossed by the present moment, by the present feeling, whatever it be, whether of pleasure or pain, is the evident cause of both. Few instances have

only vain but criminal?"—"I would take the *Ghost's* word for a thousand pound," or in preference to that of any man living, though I was told in the streets of Edinburgh, that Dr. Jamieson, the author of the "Dictionary," was quite as great a man!

been known of a final reformation on this head. Yet it is a clear case; and reason, if it were that giant that it is represented in anything but legers and books of account, would put down the abuse in an instant. It is true, this infirmity is more particularly chargeable to the English and to other Northern nations, and there has been considerable improvement among us of late years; but I suspect it is owing to a change of manners and to the opening of new sources of amusement (without the aid of ardent spirits flung in to relieve the depression of our animal spirits) more than to the excellent treatises which have been written against the use of fermented liquors, or to an increasing, tender regard to our own comfort, health, and happiness in the breast of individuals. We still find plenty of ways of tormenting ourselves and sporting with the feelings of others! I will say nothing of a passion for gaming here, as too obvious an illustration of what I mean. It is more rare and hardly to be looked on as an epidemic with us. But few that have dabbled in this vice have not become deeply involved, and few (or none) that have done so have ever retraced their steps or returned to sober calculations of the *main chance*. The majority, it is true, are not gamesters; but where the passion does exist, it completely tyrannizes over and stifles the voice of common sense, reason, and humanity. How many victims has the point of honor! I will not pretend that, as matters stand, it may not be necessary to fight a duel, under certain circumstances and on certain provocations, even in a prudential point of view (though this again proves how little the maxims and practices of the world are regulated by a mere consideration of personal safety and welfare); but I do say that the rashness with which this responsibility is often incurred, and the even seeking for trifling causes of quarrel shows anything but a consistent regard for self-interest as a general principle of action, or rather betrays a total recklessness of consequences, when opposed to pique, petulance, or passion.

Before I proceed to answer a principal objection (and indeed a staggering one at first sight) I will mention here that I think it strongly confirms my view of human nature, that men form their opinions much more from prejudice than reason. The proof that they do so is that they form such opposite ones, when the abstract

premises and independent evidences are the same. How few Calvinists become Lutherans! How few Papists Protestants! How few Tories Whigs!* Each shuts his eyes equally to facts or arguments, and persists in the view of the subject that custom, pride, and obstinacy, dictate. Interest is no more regarded than reason; for it is often at the risk both of life and fortune, that these opinions have been maintained, and it is uniformly when parties have run highest, and the strife has been deadliest, that people have been most forward to stake their existence and everything belonging to them on some unintelligible dogma or article of an old-fashioned creed.

Half the wars and fightings, martyrdoms, persecutions, feuds, antipathies, heart-burnings in the world have been about some distinction, "some trick not worth an egg"—so ready are mankind to sacrifice their all to a mere name! It may be urged, that the good of our souls, or our welfare in a future state of being, is a rational and well-grounded motive for these religious extravagances. And this is true, so far as religious zeal falls in with men's passions or the spirit of the times. A bigot was formerly ready to cut his neighbor's throat to go to Heaven, but not so ready to reform his own life, or give up a single vice or gratification, notwithstanding all the pains and penalties denounced upon it, and of which his faith in Holy Church did not suffer him to doubt a moment!

But it is contended here, that in matters not of doctrinal speculation, but of private life and domestic policy, every one consults and understands his own interest; that, whatever other *hobbies* he may have, he minds this as the main object, and contrives to make both ends meet, in spite of seeming inattention and real difficulties. "If we look around us," says a shrewd, hard-headed Scotchman, "and take examples from the neighborhood in which we live, we shall find that, allowing for occasional exceptions, diversities, and singularities, the *main chance* is still stuck to with rigid and unabated pertinacity—the accounts are wound up, and everything is right at the year's end, whatever freaks or fancies may have intervened in the course of it. The business of life

* *Certes*, more Whigs become Tories. This may also be accounted for satisfactorily though not very rationally

goes on (which is the principal thing), and every man's house stands on its own bottom. This is the case in Nicholson street, in the next street to it, and in the next street to that, and in the whole of Edinburgh, Scotland, and England, to boot." This, I allow, is a *home thrust*, and I must parry it how I can. It is a kind of heavy broad-wheeled wagon of an objection, that makes a formidable, awkward appearance, and takes up so much of the road, that I shall have a lucky escape if I can dash by it in my light gig without being upset or crushed to atoms. The persons who in the present instance have the charge of it in its progress through the streets of Edinburgh are a constitutional lawyer, a political economist, an opposition editor, and an ex-officio surveyor of the customs—fearful odds against one poor metaphysician! Their machine of human life, I confess, puts me a little in mind of those square-looking caravans one sometimes meets on the road, in which they transport wild beasts from place to place; and dull, heavy, safe, and flat as they look, the inmates continue their old habits; the monkeys play their tricks, and the panthers lick their jaws for human blood, though cramped and confined in their excursions. So the vices and follies, when they cannot break loose, do their worst *inside* this formal conveyance, the *main chance*. As this ovation is intended to pass up High street for the honor of the Scottish capital, I should wish it to stop at the shop-door of Mr. Bartholine Saddletree, to see if he is at home or in the courts. Also to inquire whether the suit of Peter Peebles is yet ended; and to take the opinion of counsel how many of the Highland lairds, or Scottish noblemen and gentlemen, that were *out* in the Fifteen and the Forty-five, perilled their lives and fortunes in the "good cause" from an eye to the *main chance?* The Baron of Bradwardine would have scorned such a suggestion; nay, it would have been below Balmawhapple or even Killancureit. But "the age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophists, economists, and calculators, has succeeded." I should say that the risk, the secresy, the possibility of the leaders having their heads stuck on Temple Bar and their estates confiscated were among the foremost causes that inflamed their zeal and stirred their blood to the enterprise.

Hardship, danger, exile, death, these words smack of honor

more than the *main chance*. The modern Scotch may be loyal on this thriving principle: their ancestors found their loyalty a very losing concern, yet they persevered in it till, and long after, it became a desperate cause. But patriotism and loyalty (true or false) are important and powerful principles in human affairs, though not always selfish and calculating. Honor is one great standard-bearer and puissant leader in the struggle of human life; and less than honor (a nickname or a bug-bear) is enough to set the multitude together by the ears, whether in civil, religious, or private brawls. But to return to our Edinburgh shop-keepers, those practical models of wisdom, and authentic epitomes of human nature. Say that by their "canny ways and pawky looks" they keep their names out of the "Gazette," yet still care (not the less perhaps) mounts behind their counters, and sits in their back-shops. A tradesman is not a bankrupt at the year's end. But what does it signify, it he is hen-pecked in the mean time, or quarrels with his wife, or beats his apprentices, or has married a woman twice as old as himself for her money, or has been jilted by his maid, or fuddles himself every night, or is laying in an apoplexy by over-eating himself, or is believed by nobody, or is a furious Whig or Tory, or a knave, or a fool, or one envious of the success of his neighbors, or dissatisfied with his own, or surly, or eaten up with indolence and procrastination, never easy but bash-ful and awkward in company (though with a vast desire to shine), or has some personal defect or weak sides on which the Devil is sure to assail him, and the venting his spleen and irrita-bility on which, through some loop-hole or other, makes the real business and torment of his life—that of his shop may go on as it pleases. Such is the perfection of reason and the triumph of the sovereign good, where there are no strong passions to disturb, or no great vices to sully it! The humors collect, the will will have head, the petty passions ferment, and we start some grievance or other, and hunt it down every hour in the day, or the machine of *still-life* could not go on even in North Britain. But were I to grant the full force and extent of the objection, I should still say that it does not bear upon my view of the subject or general assertion, that reason is an unequal match for passion. Business is a kind of gaoler or task-master, and keeps his vassals in good

order while they are under his eye, as the slave or culprit performs his task with the whip hanging over him, and punishment immediately to follow neglect; but the question is, what he would do with his recovered freedom, or what course the mind will for the most part pursue, when in the range of its general conduct it has its choice to make between a distant, doubtful, sober, rational good (or *average* state of being), and some one object of comparatively little value, that strikes the senses, flatters our pride, gives scope to the imagination, and has all the strength of passion and inclination on its side. The *main chance* then is a considerable exception, but not a fair one or a case in point, since it falls under a different head and line of argument. The fault of reason in general (which takes in the *whole* instead of parts) is that its objects, though of the utmost extent and importance, are not defined and tangible. This fault cannot be found with the pursuit of trade and commerce. It is not a mere dry abstract, undefined, speculative, however steady and well-founded conviction of the understanding. It has other levers and pulleys to enforce it, besides those of reason and reflection; as follows:—

1. The value of money is positive or specific. The interest in it is a sort of mathematical interest, reducible to number and quantity. Ten is always more than one; a part is never greater than the whole; the good we seek or attain in this way has a technical denomination; and I do not deny that in matters of strict calculation, the principle of calculation will naturally bear great sway. The returns of profit and loss are regular and mechanical, and the operations of business or the *main chance* are so too. But commonly speaking, we judge by the *degree* of excitement, not by the ultimate quantity. Thus we prefer a draught of nectar to the recovery of our health, and are on most occasions ready to exclaim,—

"An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour."

Yet there is a point at which self-will and humor stop. A man will take brandy, which is *a kind of slow poison*, but he will not take *actual* poison knowing it to be such, however slow the operation or bewitching the taste; because here the effect is absolutely fixed and certain, not variable, nor in the power of the imagina-

tion to elude or trifle with it. I see no courage in battle, but in going on what is called the *forlorn hope*.

2. Business is also an affair of habit: it calls for incessant and daily application; and what was at first a matter of necessity to supply our wants, becomes often a matter of necessity to employ our time. The man of business wants work for his head; the laborer and mechanic for his hands; so that the love of action, of difficulty of competition, the stimulus of success or failure is perhaps as strong an ingredient in men's ordinary pursuits as the love of gain. We find persons pursuing science or any *hobby-horsical* whim or handicraft that they have taken a fancy to, or persevering in a losing concern with just the same ardor and obstinacy. As to the choice of a pursuit in life, a man may not be forward to engage in business, but being once in, does not like to turn back amidst the pity of friends and the derision of enemies. How difficult is it to prevent those who have a turn for any art or science from going into these pursuits however unprofitable! Nay, how difficult is it often to prevent those who have no turn that way, but prefer starving to a certain income! If there is one in a family brighter than the rest, he is immediately designed for one of the learned professions. Really, the dull and plodding people of the world have not much reason to boast of their superior wisdom or numbers: they are in an involuntary majority!

3. The value of money is an *exchangeable* value; that is, this pursuit is available towards and convertible into a great many others. A person is in want of money, and mortgages an estate to throw it away upon a round of entertainments and company. The passion or motive here is not a hankering after money, and the individual will ruin himself for this object. Another who has the same passion for show, and a certain style of living, tries to gain a fortune in trade to indulge it, and only goes to work in a more round-about way. I remember a story of a common mechanic at Manchester, who laid out the hard-earned savings of the week in hiring a horse and livery-servant to ride behind him to Stockport every Sunday, and to dine there at an ordinary like a gentleman. The pains bestowed upon the *main chance* here was only a cover for another object, which exercised a ridiculous predominance over his mind. Money will purchase a horse, a house, a picture,

leisure, dissipation, or whatever the individual has a fancy for, that is to be purchased; but it does not follow that he is fond of all these, or of whatever will promote his real interest, because he is fond of money, but that he has a passion for some one of these objects, to which he would probably sacrifice all the rest, and his own peace and happiness into the bargain.

4. The *main chance* is an instrument of various passions, but is directly opposed to none of them, with the single exception of indolence, or the *vis inertiæ*, which of itself is seldom strong enough to master it, without the aid of some other incitement. A barrister sticks to his duty, as long as he has only love of ease to conquer; but he flings up his briefs or neglects them, if he thinks he can make a figure in Parliament. A servant-girl stays in her place and does her work, though perhaps lazy and slatternly, because no immediate temptation occurs strong enough to interfere with the necessity of gaining her bread, but she goes away with a bastard-child, because here passion and desire come in play, though the consequence is that she loses not only her place but her character and every prospect in life. No one, therefore, flings away the *main chance* without a motive, any more than he voluntarily puts his hand into the fire or breaks his neck by jumping out of the window. A man must live; the first step is a point of necessity: every man would live well, the second is a point of luxury. The having or even acquiring wealth does not prevent our enjoying it in various ways. A man may give his mornings to business, and his evenings to pleasure. There is no contradiction in this; nor does he sacrifice his ruling passion by this, any more than the man of letters by study, or the soldier by an attention to discipline. Reason and passion are opposed, not passion and business. The sot, the glutton, the debauchee, the gamester, must all have money, to make their own use of it, and they may indulge all these passions and their avarice at the same time. It is only when the last becomes the ruling passion that it puts a prohibition on the others. In that case, everything else is lost sight of; but it is seldom carried to this length, or when it is, it is far from being another name, either in its means or ends, for reason, sense, or happiness, as I have already shown.

I have taken no notice hitherto of ambition or virtue, or scarcely

of the pursuits of fame or intellect. Yet all these are important and respectable divisions of the map of human life. Who ever charged Mr. Pitt with a want of common sense, because he did not die worth a plum? Had it been proposed to Lord Byron to forfeit every penny of his estate, or every particle of his reputation, would he have hesitated to part with the former? Is not a loss of character, a stain upon honor, as severe a blow as any reverse of fortune? Do not the richest heiresses in the city marry for a title, and think themselves well off? Are there not patriots who think or dream all their lives about their country's good; philanthropists who rave about liberty and humanity at a certain yearly loss? Are there not studious men who never once thought of bettering their circumstances? Are not the liberal professions held more respectable than business, though less lucrative? Might not most people do better than they do, but that they postpone their interest to their indolence, their taste for reading, their love of pleasure, or to some other influence? And is it not generally understood that all men can make a fortune or succeed in the *main chance*, who have but that one idea in their heads? Lastly, are there not those who pursue or husband wealth for their own good, for the benefit of their friends or the relief of the distressed? But as the examples are rare, and might be supposed to make against myself, I shall not insist upon them. I think I have said enough to vindicate or apologize for my first position—

> "Masterless passion sways us to the mood
> Of what it likes or loathes;"

—or if not to make good my ground, to march out with flying colors and beat of drum!

ESSAY XXXIV.

On Reason and Imagination.

I HATE people who have no notion of anything but generalities, and forms, and creeds, and naked propositions, even worse than I dislike those who cannot for the soul of them arrive at the comprehension of an abstract idea. There are those (even among philosophers) who, deeming that all truth is contained within certain outlines and common topics, if you proceed to add color or relief from individuality, protest against the use of rhetoric as an illogical thing; and if you drop a hint of pleasure or pain as ever entering into "this breathing world," raise a prodigious outcry against all appeals to the passions.

It is, I confess, strange to me that men who pretend to more than usual accuracy in distinguishing and analysing, should insist that in treating of human nature, of moral good and evil, the nominal differences are alone of any value, or that in describing the feelings and motives of men, anything that conveys the smallest idea of what those feelings are in any given circumstances, or can by parity of reason ever be in any others, is a deliberate attempt at artifice and delusion—as if a knowledge or representation of things as they really exist (rules and definitions apart) was a proportionable departure from the truth. They stick to the table of contents, and never open the volume of the mind. They are for having maps, not pictures of the world we live in: as much as to say that a bird's-eye view of things contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you want to look for the situation of a particular spot, they turn to a pasteboard globe, on which they fix their wandering gaze; and because you cannot find the object of your search in their bald "abridgments," tell you there is no such place, or that it is not worth inquiring after. They had better confine their studies to the celestial sphere

and the signs of the zodiac; for there they will meet with no petty details to boggle at, or contradict their vague conclusions. Such persons would make excellent theologians, but are very indifferent philosophers.—To pursue this geographical reasoning a little farther. They may say that the map of a county or shire, for instance, is too large, and conveys a disproportionate idea of its relation to the whole. And we say that their map of the globe is too small, and conveys no idea of it at all.

> ——— "In the world's volume
> Our Britain shows as of it, but not in it;
> In a great pool a swan's nest:"

but is it really so? What! the county is bigger than the map at any rate: the representation falls short of the reality, by a million degrees, and you would omit it altogether in order to arrive at a balance of power in the non-entities of the understanding, and call this keeping within the bounds of sense and reason; and whatever does not come within those self-made limits is to be set aside as frivolous or monstrous. But "there are more things between heaven and earth than were ever dreamt of in this philosophy." They cannot get them all in, *of the size of life*, and therefore they reduce them on a graduated scale, till they think they can. So be it, for certain necessary and general purposes, and in compliance with the infirmity of human intellect: but at other times, let us enlarge our conceptions to the dimensions of the original objects; nor let it be pretended that we have outraged truth and nature, because we have encroached on your diminutive mechanical standard. There is no language, no description that can strictly come up to the truth and force of reality: all we have to do is to guide our descriptions and conclusions by the reality. A certain proportion must be kept: we must not invert the rules of moral perspective. Logic should enrich and invigorate its decisions by the use of imagination; as rhetoric should be governed in its application, and guarded from abuse by the checks of the understanding. Neither, I apprehend, is sufficient alone. The mind can conceive only one or a few things in their integrity: if it proceeds to more, it must have recourse to artificial substitutes, and judge by comparison merely. In the former

case, it may select the least worthy, and so distort the truth of things, by giving a hasty preference: in the latter, the danger is that it may refine and abstract so much as to attach no idea at all to them, corresponding with their practical value, or their influence on the minds of those concerned with them. Men act from individual impressions; and to know mankind, we should be acquainted with nature. Men act from passion; and we can only judge of passion by sympathy. Persons of the dry and husky class above spoken of, often seem to think even nature itself an interloper on their flimsy theories. They prefer the shadows in Plato's cave to the actual objects without it. They consider men "as mice in an air-pump," fit only for their experiments; and do not consider the rest of the universe, or "all the mighty world of eye and ear," as worth any notice at all. This is making short, but not sure work. Truth does not lie *in vacuo*, any more than in a well. We must improve our concrete experience of persons and things into the contemplation of general rules and principles; but without being grounded in individual facts and feelings, we shall end as we began, in ignorance.

It is mentioned in a short account of the Last Moments of Mr. Fox, that the conversation at the house of Lord Holland (where he died) turning upon Mr. Burke's style, that Noble Person objected to it as too gaudy and meretricious, and said that it was more profuse of flowers than fruit. On which Mr. Fox observed, that though this was a common objection, it appeared to him altogether an unfounded one; that on the contrary, the flowers often concealed the fruit beneath them, and the ornaments of style were rather an hindrance than an advantage to the sentiments they were meant to set off. In confirmation of this remark, he offered to take down the book, and translate a page anywhere into his own plain, natural style; and by his doing so, Lord Holland was convinced that he had often missed the thought from having his attention drawn off to the dazzling imagery. Thus people continually find fault with the colors of style as incompatible with the truth of the reasoning, but without any foundation whatever. If it were a question about the figure of two triangles, and any person were to object that one triangle was green and the other yellow, and bring this to bear upon the acuteness or obtuseness of

the angles, it would be obvious to remark that the color had nothing to do with the question. But in a dispute whether two objects are colored alike, the discovery, that one is green and the other yellow, is fatal. So with respect to moral truth (as distinct from mathematical), whether a thing is good or evil, depends on the quantity of passion, of feeling, of pleasure and pain connected with it, and with which we must be made acquainted in order to come to a sound conclusion, and not on the inquiry whether it is round or square. Passion, in short, is the essence, the chief ingredient in moral truth; and the warmth of passion is sure to kindle the light of imagination on the objects around it. The "words that glow" are almost inseparable from the "thoughts that burn." Hence logical reason and practical truth are *disparates*. It is easy to raise an outcry against violent invectives, to talk aloud against extravagance and enthusiasm, to pick a quarrel with everything but the most calm, candid, and qualified statement of facts: but there are enormities to which no words can do adequate justice. Are we then, in order to form a complete idea of them, to omit every circumstance of aggravation, or to suppress every feeling of impatience that arises out of the details, lest we should be accused of giving way to the influence of prejudice and passion? This would be to falsify the impression altogether, to misconstrue reason, and fly in the face of nature. Suppose, for instance, that in the discussions on the Slave-Trade, a description to the life was given of the horrors of the *Middle Passage* (as it was termed), that you saw the manner in which thousands of wretches, year after year, were stowed together in the hold of a slave-ship, without air, without light, without food, without hope, so that what they suffered in reality was brought home to you in imagination, till you felt in sickness of heart as one of them, could it be said that this was a prejudging of the case, that your knowing the extent of the evil disqualified you from pronouncing sentence upon it, and that your disgust and abhorrence were the effects of a heated imagination? No. Those evils that inflame the imagination and make the heart sick, ought not to leave the head cool. This is the very test and measure of the degree of the enormity, that it involuntarily staggers and appals the mind. If it were a common iniquity, if it were slight and partial, or

necessary, it would not have this effect; but it very properly carries away the feelings, and (if you will) overpowers the judgment, because it is a mass of evil so monstrous and unwarranted as not to be endured, even in thought. A man on the rack does not suffer the less, because the extremity of anguish takes away his command of feeling and attention to appearances. A pang inflicted on humanity is not the less real, because it stirs up sympathy in the breast of humanity. Would you tame down the glowing language of justifiable passion into that of cold indifference, of self-complacent, sceptical reasoning, and thus take out the sting of indignation from the mind of the spectator? Not, surely, till you have removed the nuisance by the levers that strong feeling alone can set at work, and have thus taken away the pang of suffering that caused it! Or say that the question were proposed to you, whether, on some occasion, you should thrust your hand into the flames, and were coolly told that you were not at all to consider the pain and anguish it might give you, nor suffer yourself to be led away by any such idle appeals to natural sensibility, but to refer the decision to some abstract, technical ground of propriety, would you not laugh in your adviser's face? Oh! no; where our own interests are concerned, or where we are sincere in our professions of regard, the pretended distinction between sound judgment and lively imagination is quickly done away with. But I would not wish a better or more philosophical standard of morality, than that we should think and feel towards others as we should, if it were our own case. If we look for a higher standard than this, we shall not find it; but shall lose the substance for the shadow! Again, suppose an extreme or individual instance is brought forward in any general question, as that of the cargo of sick slaves that were thrown overboard as so much *live lumber* by the captain of a Guinea vessel, in the year 1775, which was one of the things that first drew the attention of the public to this nefarious traffic,* or the practice of suspending contumacious negroes in cages to have their eyes pecked out, and to be devoured alive by birds of prey—Does this form no rule, because the mischief is solitary

* See Memoirs of Granville Sharp, by Prince Hoare, Esq.

or excessive? The rule is absolute; for we feel that nothing of the kind could take place, or be tolerated for an instant, in any system that was not rotten at the core. If such things are ever done in any circumstances with impunity, we know what must be done every day under the same sanction. It shows that there is an utter deadness to every principle of justice or feeling of humanity; and where this is the case, we may take out our tables of abstraction, and set down what is to follow through every gradation of petty, galling vexation, and wanton, unrelenting cruelty. A state of things, where a single instance of the kind can possibly happen without exciting general consternation, ought not to exist for half an hour. The parent hydra-headed injustice ought to be crushed at once with all its viper brood. Practices, the mention of which makes the flesh creep, and that affront the light of day, ought to be put down the instant they are known, without inquiry and without repeal.

There was an example of eloquent moral reasoning connected with this subject, given in the work just referred to, which was not the less solid and profound, because it was produced by a burst of strong personal and momentary feeling. It is what follows:—"The name of a person having been mentioned in the presence of Naimbanna (a young African chieftain), who was understood by him to have publicly asserted something very degrading to the general character of Africans, he broke out into violent and vindictive language. He was immediately reminded of the Christian duty of forgiving his enemies; upon which he answered nearly in the following words:—'If a man should rob me of my money, I can forgive him: if a man should shoot at me, or try to stab me, I can forgive him; if a man should sell me and all my family to a slave-ship, so that we should pass all the rest of our days in slavery in the West Indies, I can forgive him; but' (added he, rising from his seat with much emotion), 'if a man takes away the character of the people of my country, I never can forgive him.' Being asked why he would not extend his forgiveness to those who took away the character of the people of his country, he answered: 'if a man should try to kill me, or should sell me and my family for slaves, he would do an injury to as many as he might kill or sell; but if any one takes away

the character of Black people, that man injures Black people all over the world; and when he has once taken away their character, there is nothing which he may not do to Black people ever after. That man, for instance, will beat Black men, and say, *Oh, it is only a Black man, why should not I beat him?* That man will take away all the people of Africa if he can catch them; and if you ask him. But why do you take away all these people? he will say, *Oh! they are only Black people—they are not like White people—why should I not take them?* That is the reason why I cannot forgive the man who takes away the character of the people of my country.'"—MEMOIRS OF GRANVILLE SHARP, p. 369.

I conceive more real light and vital heat is thrown into the argument by this struggle of natural feeling to relieve itself from the weight of a false and injurious imputation, than would be added to it by twenty volumes of tables and calculations of the *pros* and *cons* of right and wrong, of utility and inutility, in Mr. Bentham's hand-writing. In allusion to this celebrated person's theory of morals, I will here go a step farther, and deny that the dry calculation of consequences is the sole and unqualified test of right and wrong; for we are to take into the account (as well) the reaction of these consequences upon the mind of the individual and the community. In morals, the cultivation of a *moral sense* is not the last thing to be attended to—nay, it is the first. Almost the only unsophisticated or spirited remark that we meet with in Paley's Moral Philosophy, is one which is also to be found in Tucker's Light of Nature—namely, that in dispensing charity to common beggars, we are not to consider so much the good it may do the object of it, as the harm it will do the person who refuses it. A sense of compassion is involuntarily excited by the immediate appearance of distress, and a violence and injury is done to the kindly feelings by withholding the obvious relief, the trifling pittance in our power. This is a remark, I think, worthy of the ingenious and amiable author from whom Paley borrowed it. So with respect to the atrocities committed in the Slave-Trade, it could not be set up as a doubtful plea in their favor, that the actual and intolerable sufferings inflicted on the individuals were compensated by certain advantages in a commercial and political

point of view—in a moral sense they *cannot* be compensated. They hurt the public mind: they harden and sear the natural feelings. The evil is monstrous and palpable; the pretended good is remote and contingent. In morals, as in philosophy, *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio* What does not touch the heart, or come home to the feelings, goes comparatively for little or nothing. A benefit that exists merely in possibility, and is judged of only by the forced dictates of the understanding, is not a set off against an evil (say of equal magnitude in itself) that strikes upon the senses, that haunts the imagination, and lacerates the human heart. A spectacle of deliberate cruelty, that shocks every one that sees and hears of it, is not to be justified by any calculations of cold-blooded self-interest—is not to be permitted in any case. It is prejudged and self-condemned. Necessity has been therefore justly called "the tyrant's plea." It is no better with the mere doctrine of utility, which is the sophist's plea. Thus, for example, an infinite number of lumps of sugar put into Mr. Bentham's artificial ethical scales wou d never weigh against the pounds of human flesh or drops of human blood, that are sacrificed to produce them. The taste of the former on the palate is evanescent; but the others sit heavy on the soul. The one are an object to the imagination: the others only to the understanding. But man is an animal compounded both of imagination and understanding; and, in treating of what is good for man's nature, it is necessary to consider both. A calculation of the mere ultimate advantages, without regard to natural feelings and affections, may improve the external face and physical comforts of society, but will leave it heartless and worthless in itself. In a word, the sympathy of the individual with the consequences of his own act is to be attended to (no less than the consequences themselves) in every sound system of morality; and this must be determined by certain natural laws of the human mind, and not by rules of logic or arithmetic

The aspect of a moral question is to be judged of very much like the face of a country, by the projecting points, by what is striking and memorable, by that which leaves traces of itself behind, or "casts its shadow before." Millions of acres do not make a picture; nor the calculation of all the consequences in the

world a sentiment. We must have some outstanding object for the mind, as well as the eye, to dwell on and recur to—something marked and decisive to give a tone and texture to the moral feelings. Not only is the attention thus roused and kept alive; but what is most important as to the principles of action, the desire of good or hatred of evil is powerfully excited. But all individual facts and history come under the head of what these people call *Imagination*. All full, true, and particular accounts they consider as romantic, ridiculous, vague, inflammatory. As a case in point, one of this school of thinkers declares that he was qualified to write a better History of India from having never been there than if he had, as the last might lead to local distinctions or party prejudices: that is to say, that he could describe a country better at second-hand than from original observation, or that from having seen no one object, place, or person, he could do ampler justice to the whole. It might be maintained, much on the same principle, that an artist would paint a better likeness of a person after he was dead, from description or different sketches of the face, than from having seen the individual living man. On the contrary, I humbly conceive that the seeing half a dozen wandering Lascars in the streets of London gives one a better idea of the soul of India, that cradle of the world, and (as it were) garden of the sun, than all the charts, records, and statistical reports that can be sent over, even under the classical administration of Mr. Canning. *Ex uno omnes*. One Hindoo differs more from a citizen of London than he does from all other Hindoos; and by seeing the two first, man to man, you know comparatively and essentially what they are, nation to nation. By a very few specimens you fix the great leading differences, which are nearly the same throughout. Any one thing is a better representative of its kind, than all the words and definitions in the world can be. The sum total is indeed different from the particulars; but it is not easy to guess at any general result, without some previous induction of particulars and appeal to experience.

"What can we reason, but from what we know?"

Again, it is quite wrong, instead of the most striking illustrations of human nature, to single out the stalest and tritest, as if

they were most authentic and infallible; not considering that from the extremes you may infer the means, but you cannot from the means infer the extremes in any case. It may be said that the extreme and individual cases may be retorted upon us:—I deny it, unless it be with truth. The imagination is an *associating* principle; and has an instinctive perception when a thing belongs to a system, or is only an exception to it. For instance, the excesses committed by the victorious besiegers of a town do not attach to the nation committing them, but to the nature of that sort of warfare, and are common to both sides. They may be struck off the score of national prejudices. The cruelties exercised upon slaves, on the other hand, grow out of the relation between master and slave; and the mind intuitively revolts at them as such. The cant about the horrors of the French Revolution is mere cant—everybody knows it to be so: each party would have retaliated upon the other: it was a civil war, like that for a disputed succession: the general principle of the right or wrong of the change remained untouched. Neither would these horrors have taken place, except from Prussian manifestos, and treachery within: there were none in the American, and have been none in the Spanish Revolution. The massacre of St. Bartholomew arose out of the principles of that religion which exterminates with fire and sword, and keeps no faith with heretics.—If it be said that nicknames, party watch-words, bugbears, the cry of "No Popery," &c., are continually played off upon the imagination with the most mischievous effect, I answer that most of these bugbears and terms of vulgar abuse have arisen out of abstruse speculation or barbarous prejudice, and have seldom had their root in real facts or natural feelings. Besides, are not general topics, rules, exceptions, endlessly bandied to and fro, and balanced one against the other by the most learned disputants? Have not three-fourths of all the wars, schisms, heart-burnings in the world begun on mere points of controversy?—There are two classes whom I have found given to this kind of reasoning against the use of our senses and feelings in what concerns human nature, *viz.*, knaves and fools. The last do it, because they think their own shallow dogmas settle all questions best without any farther appeal; and the first do it, because they know that the refine-

ments of the head are more easily got rid of than the suggestions of the heart, and that a strong sense of injustice, excited by a particular case in all its aggravations, tells more against them than all the distinctions of the jurists. Facts, concrete existences, are stubborn things, and are not so soon tampered with or turned about to any point we please, as mere names and abstractions. Of these last it may be said,

"A breath can *mar* them, as a breath has made:"

and they are liable to be puffed away by every wind of doctrine, or baffled by every plea of convenience. I wonder that Rousseau gave into this cant about the want of soundness in rhetorical and imaginative reasoning; and was so fond of this subject, as to make an abridgment of Plato's rhapsodies upon it, by which he was led to expel poets from his commonwealth. Thus two of the most flowery writers are those who have exacted the greatest severity of style from others. Rousseau was too ambitious of an exceedingly technical and scientific mode of reasoning, scarcely attainable in the mixed questions of human life (as may be seen in his Social Contract—a work of great ability, but extreme formality of structure), and it is probable he was led into this error in seeking to overcome his too great warmth of natural temperament and a tendency to indulge merely the impulses of passion. Burke, who was a man of fine imagination, had the good sense (without any of this false modesty) to defend the moral use of the imagination, and is himself one of the grossest instances of its abuse.

It is not merely the fashion among philosophers—the poets also have got into a way of scouting individuality as beneath the sublimity of their pretensions, and the universality of their genius. The philosophers have become mere logicians, and their rivals mere rhetoricians; for as these last must float on the surface, and are not allowed to be harsh and crabbed and recondite like the others, by leaving out the individual, they become commonplace. They cannot reason, and they must declaim. Modern tragedy, in particular, is no longer like a vessel making the voyage of life, and tossed about by the winds and waves of passion, but is converted into a handsomely-constructed steam-

boat, that is moved by the sole expansive power of words. Lord Byron has launched several of these ventures lately (if ventures they may be called) and may continue in the same strain as long as he pleases. We have not now a number of *dramatis personæ* affected by particular incidents and speaking according to their feelings, or as the occasion suggests, but each mounting the rostrum, and delivering his opinion on fate, fortune, and the entire consummation of things. The individual is not of sufficient importance to occupy his own thoughts or the thoughts of others. The poet fills his page with *grandes pensées*. He covers the face of nature with the beauty of his sentiments and the brilliancy of his paradoxes. We have the subtleties of the head, instead of the workings of the heart, and possible justifications instead of the actual motives of conduct. This all seems to proceed on a false estimate of individual nature and the value of human life We have been so used to count by millions of late, that we think the units that compose them nothing, and are so prone to trace remote principles, that we neglect the immediate results. As an instance of the opposite style of dramatic dialogue, in which the persons speak for themselves, and to one another, I will give, by way of illustration, a passage from an old tragedy, in which a brother has just caused his sister to be put to a violent death.

"*Bosola.* Fix your eye here.
Ferdinand Constantly.
Bosola. Do you not weep?
Other sins only speak; murther shrieks out:
The element of water moistens the earth;
But blood flies upwards, and bedews the heavens.
Ferdinand. Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle; she died young,
Bosola. I think not so: her infelicity
Seem'd to have years too many.
Ferdinand She and I were twins:
And should I die this instant, I had lived
Her time to a minute."

DUCHESS OF MALFY, Act IV., Scene 2.

How fine is the constancy with which he first fixes his eye on the dead body, with a forced courage, and then, as his resolution wavers, how natural is his turning his face away, and the reflec-

tion that strikes him on her youth and beauty and untimely death, and the thought that they were twins, and his measuring his life by hers up to the present period, as if all that was to come of it were nothing! Now, I would fain ask whether there is not in this contemplation of the interval that separates the beginning from the end of life, of a life too so varied from good to ill, and of the pitiable termination of which the person speaking has been the wilful and guilty cause, enough to "give the mind pause?" Is not that revelation as it were of the whole extent of our being which is made by the flashes of passion and stroke of calamity, a subject sufficiently staggering to have place in legitimate tragedy? Are not the struggles of the will with untoward events and the adverse passions of others as interesting and instructive in the representation as reflections on the mutability of fortune or inevitableness of destiny, or on the passions of men in general? The tragic Muse does not merely utter muffled sounds: but we see the paleness on the cheek, and the life-blood gushing from the heart! The interest we take in our own lives, in our successes or disappointments, and the *home* feelings that arise out of these, when well described, are the clearest and truest mirror in which we can see the image of human nature. For in this sense each man is a microcosm. What he is, the rest are—whatever his joys and sorrows are composed of, theirs are the same—no more, no less.

> "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

But it must be the genuine touch of nature, not the outward flourishes and varnish of art. The spouting, oracular, didactic figure of the poet no more answers to the living man, than the lay-figure of the painter does. We may well say to such a one

> "Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
> That thou dost glare with: thy bones are marrowless,
> Thy blood is cold!"

Man is (so to speak) an endless and infinitely varied repetition, and if we know what one man feels, we so far know what a thousand feel in the sanctuary of their being. Our feeling of general humanity is at once an aggregate of a thousand different

truths, and it is also the same truth a thousand times told. As is our perception of this original truth, the root of our imagination, so will the force and richness of the general impression proceeding from it be. The boundary of our sympathy is a circle which enlarges itself according to its propulsion from the centre—the heart. If we are imbued with a deep sense of individual weal or wo, we shall be awe-struck at the idea of humanity in general. If we know little of it but its abstract and common properties without their particular applications, their force or degrees, we shall care just as little as we know either about the whole or the individuals. If we understand the texture and vital feeling, we then can fill up the outline, but we cannot supply the former from having the latter given. Moral and poetical truth is like expression in a picture—the one is not to be attained by smearing over a large canvas, nor the other by bestriding a vague topic. In such matters, the most pompous sciolists are accordingly found to be the greatest contemners of human life. But I defy any great tragic writer to despise that nature which he understands, or that heart which he has probed, with all its rich bleeding materials of joy and sorrow. The subject may not be a source of much triumph to him, from its alternate light and shade, but it can never become one of supercilious indifference. He must feel a strong reflex interest in it, corresponding to that which he has depicted in the characters of others. Indeed, the object and end of playing, "both at the first and now, is to hold the mirror up to nature," to enable us to feel for others as for ourselves, or to embody a distinct interest out of ourselves by the force of imagination and passion. This is summed up in the wish of the poet—

"To feel what others are, and know myself a man."

If it does not do this, it loses both its dignity and its proper use.

ESSAY XXXV.

On Respectable People.

THERE is not any term that is oftener misapplied, or that is a stronger instance of the abuse of language, than this same word *respectable*. By a *respectable man* is generally meant a person whom there is no reason for respecting, or none that we choose to name: for if there is any good reason for the opinion we wish to express, we naturally assign it as the ground of his respectability. If the person whom you are desirous to characterize favorably, is distinguished for his good-nature, you say that he is a good-natured man; if by his zeal to serve his friends, you call him a friendly man; if by his wit or sense, you say that he is witty or sensible; if by his honesty or learning, you say so at once; but if he is none of these, and there is no one quality which you can bring forward to justify the high opinion you would be thought to entertain of him, you then take the question for granted, and jump at a conclusion, by observing gravely, that "he is a very respectable man." It is clear, indeed, that where we have any striking and generally admitted reason for respecting a man, the most obvious way to ensure the respect of others, will be to mention his estimable qualities; where these are wanting, the wisest course must be to say nothing about them, but to insist on the general inference which we have our particular reasons for drawing, only vouching for its authenticity. If, for instance, the only motive we have for thinking or speaking well of another is, that he gives us good dinners, as this is not a valid reason to those who do not, like us, partake of his hospitality, we may (without going into particulars) content ourselves with assuring them, that he is a most respectable man: if he is a slave to those above him, and an oppressor of those below him, but sometimes makes us the channels of his bounty or the tools of his caprice, it will be as

well to say nothing of the matter, but to confine ourselves to the safer generality, that he is a person of the highest respectability: if he is a low dirty fellow, who has amassed an immense fortune, which he does not know what to do with, the possession of it alone will guarantee his respectability, if we say nothing of the manner in which he has come by it, or in which he spends it. A man may be a knave or a fool, or both (as it may happen), and yet be a most respectable man, in the common and authorized sense of the term, provided he saves appearances, and does not give common fame a handle for no longer keeping up the imposture. The best title to the character of respectability lies in the convenience of those who echo the cheat, and in the conventional hypocrisy of the world. Any one may lay claim to it who is willing to give himself airs of importance, and can find means to divert others from inquiring too strictly into his pretensions. It is a disposable commodity,—not a part of the man, that sticks to him like his skin, but an appurtenance, like his goods and chattels. It is meat, drink, and clothing to those who take the benefit of it by allowing others the credit. It is the current coin, the circulating medium, in which the factitious intercourse of the world is carried on, the bribe which interest pays to vanity. Respectability includes all that vague and undefinable mass of respect floating in the world, which arises from sinister motives in the person who pays it, and is offered to adventitious and doubtful qualities in the person who receives it. It is spurious and nominal; hollow and venal. To suppose that it is to be taken literally or applied to sterling merit, would betray the greatest ignorance of the customary use of speech. When we hear the word coupled with the name of any individual, it would argue a degree of romantic simplicity to imagine that it implies any one quality of head or heart, any one excellence of body or mind, any one good action or praiseworthy sentiment; but as soon as it is mentioned, it conjures up the ideas of a handsome house with large acres round it, a sumptuous table, a cellar well stocked with excellent wines, splendid furniture, a fashionable equipage, with a long list of elegant contingencies. It is not what a man *is*, but what he *has*, that we speak of in the significant use of this term. He may be the poorest creature in the world in himself, but if he is well

to do, and can spare some of his superfluities, if he can lend us his purse or his countenance upon occasion, he then "buys golden opinions" of us;—it is but fit that we should speak well of the bridge that carries us over, and in return for what we can get from him, we embody our servile gratitude, hopes, and fears, in this word *respectability*. By it we pamper his pride, and feed our own necessities. It must needs be a very honest uncorrupted word that is the go-between in this disinterested kind of traffic. We do not think of applying this word to a great poet or a great painter, to the man of genius, or the man of virtue, for it is seldom we can *sponge* upon them. It would be a solecism for any one to pretend to the character who has a shabby coat to his back, who goes without a dinner, or has not a good house over his head. He who has reduced himself in the world by devoting himself to a particular study, or adhering to a particular cause, occasions only a smile of pity or a shrug of contempt at the mention of his name; while he who has raised himself in it by a different course, who has become rich for want of ideas, and powerful from want of principle, is looked up to with silent homage, and passes for a respectable man. "The learned pate ducks to the golden fool." We spurn at virtue and genius in rags; and lick the dust in the presence of vice and folly in purple. When Otway was left to starve after having produced "Venice Preserv'd," there was nothing in the phrenzied action with which he devoured the food that choked him, to provoke the respect of the mob, who would have hooted at him the more for knowing that he was a poet. Spenser, kept waiting for the hundred pounds which Burleigh grudged him "for a song," might feel the mortification of his situation; but the statesman never felt any diminution of his Sovereign's regard in consequence of it. Charles the Second's neglect of his favorite poet Butler did not make him look less gracious in the eyes of his courtiers, or of the wits and critics of the time. Burns's embarrassments, and the temptations to which he was exposed by his situation, degraded him; but left no stigma on his patrons, who still meet to celebrate his memory, and consult about his monument, in the face of day. To enrich the mind of a country by works of art or science, and leave yourself poor, is not the way for any one to rank as respectable, at

least in his life-time:—to oppress, to enslave, to cheat, and plunder it, is a much better way. "The time gives evidence of it." But the instances are common.

Respectability means a man's situation and success in life, not his character or conduct. The city merchant never loses his respectability till he becomes a bankrupt. After that, we hear no more of it or him. The Justice of the Peace, and the Parson of the parish, the Lord and the Squire, are allowed, by immemorial usage, to be very respectable people, though no one ever thinks of asking why. They are a sort of fixtures in this way. To take an example from one of them. The Country Parson may pass his whole time, when he is not employed in the cure of souls, in flattering his rich neighbors, and leaguing with them to *snub* his poor ones, in seizing poachers, and encouraging informers; he may be exorbitant in exacting his tithes, harsh to his servants, the dread and bye-word of the village where he resides, and yet all this, though it may be notorious, shall abate nothing of his respectability. It will not hinder his patron from giving him another living to play the petty tyrant in, or prevent him from riding over to the Squire's in his carriage and being well received, or from sitting on the bench of Justices with due decorum and clerical dignity. The poor Curate, in the mean time, who may be a real comfort to the bodies and minds of his parishioners, will be passed by without notice. Parson Adams, drinking his ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen, makes no very respectable figure; but Sir Thomas himself was right worshipful, and his widow a person of honor!—A few such historiographers as Fielding would put an end to the farce of respectability, with several others like it. Peter Pounce, in the same author, was a consummation of this character, translated into the most vulgar English. The character of Captain Blifil, his epitaph, and funeral sermon, are worth tomes of casuistry and patched-up theories of moral sentiments. Pope somewhere exclaims, in his fine indignant way,

> "What can ennoble sots, or knaves, or cowards?
> Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

But this is the heraldry of poets, not of the world. In fact, the only way for a poet now-a-days to emerge from the obscurity

of poverty and genius, is to prostitute his pen, turn literary pimp to some borough-mongering lord, canvass for him at elections, and by this means aspire to the same importance, and be admitted on the same respectable footing with him as his valet, his steward, or his practising attorney. A Jew, a stock-jobber, a war-contractor, a successful monopolist, a Nabob, an Indian Director, or an African slave-dealer, are all very respectable people in their turn. A Member of Parliament is not only respectable, but *honorable*;—"all honorable men!" Yet this circumstance, which implies such a world of respect, really means nothing. To say of any one that he is a Member of Parliament, is to say, at the same time, that he is not at all distinguished as such. Nobody ever thought of telling you, that Mr. Fox or Mr. Pitt were Members of Parliament. Such is the constant difference between names and things!

The most mischievous and offensive use of this word has been in politics. By respectable people (in the fashionable cant of the day) are meant those who have not a particle of regard for any one but themselves, who have feathered their own nests, and only want to lie snug and warm in them. They have been set up and appealed to as the only friends of their country and the Constitution, while in truth they were friends to nothing but their own interests. With them all is well, if they are well off. They are raised by their lucky stars above the reach of the distresses of the community, and are cut off by their situation and sentiments, from any sympathy with their kind. They would see their country ruined before they would part with the least of their superfluities. Pampered in luxury and their own selfish comforts, they are proof against the calls of patriotism, and the cries of humanity. They would not get a scratch with a pin to save the universe. They are more affected by the overturning of a plate of turtle-soup than by the starving of a whole county. The most desperate characters, picked from the most necessitous and depraved classes, are not worse judges of politics than your true, staunch, thorough-paced "lives and fortunes men," who have what is called a *stake* in the country, and see everything through the medium of their cowardly and unprincipled hopes and fears.—London is, perhaps, the only place in which the standard of

respectability at all varies from the standard of money. There things go as much by appearance as by weight; and he may be said to be a respectable man who cuts a certain figure in company by being dressed in the fashion, and venting a number of common-place things with tolerable grace and fluency. If a person there brings a certain share of information and good manners into mixed society, it is not asked, when he leaves it, whether he is rich or not. Lords and fiddlers, authors and common councilmen, editors of newspapers and parliamentary speakers meet together, and the difference is not so much marked as one would suppose. To be an Edinburgh Reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society.

ESSAY XXXVI.

On Novelty and Familiarity.

"*Horatio.* Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.
Hamlet. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense."

SHAKSPEARE represents his *Grave-digger* as singing while he is occupied in his usual task of flinging the skulls out of the earth with his spade. On this he takes occasion to remark, through one of his speakers, the effect of habit in blunting our sensibility to what is painful or disgusting in itself. "Custom hath made it a property of easiness in him." To which the other is made to reply in substance, that those who have the least to do have the finest feelings generally. The minds and bodies of those who are enervated by luxury and ease, and who have not had to encounter the wear-and-tear of life, present a soft, unresisting surface to outward impressions, and are endued with a greater degree of susceptibility to pleasure and pain. Habit in most cases hardens and encrusts, by taking away the keener edge of our sensations: but does it not in others quicken and refine, by giving a mechanical facility, and by engrafting an acquired sense? Habit may be said in technical language to add to our irritability and lessen our sensibility, or to sharpen our active perceptions, and deaden our passive ones. Practice makes perfect—experience makes us wise. The one refers to what we have to do, the other to what we feel. I will endeavor to explain the distinction, and to give some examples in each kind.

Clowns, servants, and common laborers have, it is true, hard and coarse hands, because they are accustomed to hard and coarse employments; but mechanics, artizans, and artists of various descriptions, who are as constantly employed, though on works demanding greater skill and exactness, acquire a proportionable

nicety and discrimination of tact with practice and unremitted application. A working jeweller can perceive slight distinctions of surface, and make the smallest incisions in the hardest substances from mere practice: a woollen-draper perceives the different degrees of the fineness in cloth, on the same principle; a watch-maker will insert a great bony fist, and perform the nicest operations among the springs and wheels of a complicated and curious machinery, where the soft delicate hand of a woman or a child would make nothing but blunders. Again, a blind man shows a prodigious sagacity in hearing and almost *feeling* objects at a distance from him. His other senses acquire an almost preternatural quickness from the necessity of recurring to them oftener, and relying on them more implicitly, in consequence of the privation of sight. The musician distinguishes tones and notes, the painter expressions and colors, from constant habit and unwearied attention, that are quite lost upon the common observer The critic discovers beauties in a poem, the poet features in nature, that are generally overlooked by those who have not employed their imaginations or understandings on these particular studies. Whatever art or science we devote ourselves to, we grow more perfect in with time and practice. The range of our perceptions is at once enlarged and refined. But—there lies the question that must "give us pause"—is the pleasure increased in proportion to our habitual and critical discernment, or does not our familiarity with nature, with science, and with art, breed an indifference for those objects we are most conversant with and most masters of? I am afraid the answer, if an honest one, must be on the unfavorable side; and that from the moment that we can be said to understand any subject thoroughly, or can execute any art skilfully, our pleasure in it will be found to be on the decline. No doubt, that with the opening of every new inlet of ideas, there is unfolded a new source of pleasure; but this does not last much longer than the first discovery we make of this *terra incognita;* and with the closing up of every avenue of novelty, of curiosity, and of mystery, there is an end also of our transport, our wonder, and our delight; or it is converted into a very sober, rational, and household sort of satisfaction.

There is a craving after information, as there is after food;

and it is in supplying the void, in satisfying the appetite, that the pleasure in both cases chiefly consists. When the uneasy want is removed, both the pleasure and the pain cease. So in the acquisition of knowledge or of skill, it is the transition from perplexity and helplessness, that relieves and delights us; it is the surprise occasioned by the unfolding of some new aspect of nature, that fills our eyes with tears and our hearts with joy; it is the fear of not succeeding, that makes success so welcome, and a giddy uncertainty about the extent of our acquisitions, that makes us drunk with unexpected possession. We are happy, not in the total amount of our knowledge, but in the last addition we have made to it, in the removal of some obstacle, in the drawing aside of some veil, in the contrast between the obscurity of night and the brightness of the dawn. But objects are magnified in the mist and haze of confusion; the mind is most open to receive striking impressions of things in the outset of its progress. The most trivial pursuits or successes then agitate the whole brain; whereas afterwards the most important only occupy one corner of it. The facility which habit gives in admitting new ideas, or in reflecting upon old ones, renders the exercise of intellectual activity a matter of comparative insignificance; and by taking away the resistance and the difficulty, takes away the liveliness of impulse that imparts a sense of pleasure or of pain to the soul. No one reads the same book twice over with the same satisfaction. It is not that our knowledge of it is not greater the second time than the first: but our interest in it is less, because the addition we make to our knowledge the second time is very trifling, while in the first perusal it was all *clear gain*. Thus in youth and childhood every step is fairy-ground, because every step is an advance in knowledge and pleasure, opens new prospects, and excites new hopes, as in after-years, though we may enlarge our circle a little, and measure our way more accurately, yet in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we only retrace our steps, and repeat the same dull round of weariness and disappointment. Knowledge is power; but it is not pleasure, except when it springs immediately out of ignorance and incapacity. An actor, who plays a character for the hundred and fortieth time, understands and perhaps performs it better; but does he feel

the part, has he the same pleasure in it as he had the first time? The wonder is how he can go through with it at all; nor could he, were he not supported by the plaudits of the audience, who seem like new friends to him, or urged on by the fear of disgrace to which no man is ever reconciled.

I will here take occasion to suggest what appears to me the true state of the question, whether a great actor is enabled to embody his part from feeling or from study. I think at the time from neither; but merely (or chiefly at least) from habit. But I think he must have felt the character in the first instance with all the enthusiasm of nature and genius, or he never would have distinguished himself in it. To say that the intellect alone can determine or supply the movements or the language of passion, is little short of a contradiction in terms. Substituting the head for the heart is like saying that the eye is a judge of sounds or the ear of colors. If a man in cold blood knows how another feels in a fit of passion, it is from having been in a passion himself before. Nor can the indifferent observation of the outward signs attain to the truth of nature, without the inward sympathy to impel us forward, and to tell us where to stop. Without that living criterion, we shall be either tame and mechanical, or turgid and extravagant. The study of individual models produces imitators and mannerists: the study of general principles produces pedants. It is feeling alone that makes up for the deficiencies of either mode of study; that expands the meagreness of the one, that unbends the rigidity of the other, that floats a man into the tide of popularity, and electrifies an audience. It is feeling, or it is hope and fear, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, that is the original source of the effects in nature which are brought forward on the stage; and assuredly it is a sympathy with this feeling, that must dictate the truest and most natural imitations of them. To suppose that a person altogether dead to these primary passions of the human breast can make a great actor, or feign the effects while he is entirely ignorant of the cause, is no less absurd than to suppose that I can describe a place which I never saw, or mimic a voice which I never heard, or speak a language which I never learnt. An actor void of genius and passion may be taught to strut about the stage, and mouth out his words with mock-solem-

nity, and give himself the airs of a great actor, but he will never *be* one. He may express his own emptiness and vanity, and make people stare, but he will not "send the hearers weeping to their beds." The true, original master-touches that go to the heart, must come from it. There is neither truth nor beauty without nature. Habit may repeat the lesson that is thus learnt, just as a poet may transcribe a fine passage without being affected by it at the time; but he could not have written it in the first instance without feeling the beauty of the object he was describing, or without having been deeply impressed with it in some moment of enthusiasm. It was then that his genius was inspired, his style formed, and the foundation of his fame laid. People tell you that Sterne was hard-hearted; that the author of Waverley is a mere worldling; that Shakspeare was a man without passions. Do not believe them. Their passions might have worn themselves out with constant over-excitement, so that they only knew how they formerly felt; or they might have the control over them; or from their very compass and variety they might have kept one another in check, so that none got very much a-head, and broke out into extravagant and overt acts. But those persons must have experienced the feelings they express, and entered into the situations they describe so finely, at some period or other of their lives: the sacred source from whence the tears trickle down the cheeks of others, was once full, though it may now be dried up; and in all cases where a strong impression of truth and nature is conveyed to the minds of others, it must have previously existed in an equal or greater degree in the mind producing it. Perhaps it does not strictly follow, that

> "They best can paint them, who have felt them most."

To do this in perfection other qualifications may be necessary. language may be wanting where the heart speaks, but that the tongue or the pen or pencil can describe the workings of nature with the highest truth and eloquence without being prompted or holding any communication with the heart, past, present, or to come, I utterly deny. When Talma, in the part of Œdipus, after the discovery of his misfortune, slowly raises his hands and joins them together over his head in an attitude of despair, I conceive it

is because in the extremity of his anguish, and in the full sense of his ghastly and desolate situation, he feels a want of something as a shield or covering to protect him from the weight that is ready to fall and crush him, and he makes use of that fine and impressive action for this purpose:—not that I suppose he is affected in this manner every time he repeats it, but he never would have thought of it but from having this deep and bewildering feeling of weight and oppression, which naturally suggested it to his imagination, and at the same time assured him that it was just. Feeling is in fact the scale that weighs the truth of all original conceptions. When Mrs. Siddons played the part of Mrs. Beverly in the Gamester, and on Stukely's abrupt declaration of his unprincipled passion at the moment of her husband's imprisonment, threw into her face that noble succession of varying emotions, first seeming not to understand him, then, as her doubt is removed, rising into sudden indignation, then turning to pity, and ending in a burst of hysteric scorn and laughter, was this the effect of stratagem or forethought as a painter arranges a number of colors on his palette? No—but by placing herself amply in the situation of her heroine, and entering into all the circumstances, and feeling the dignity of insulted virtue and misfortune, that wonderful display of keen and high-wrought expressions burst from her involuntarily at the same moment, and kindled her face almost into a blaze of lightning. Yet Mrs. Siddons is sometimes accused of being cold and insensible. I do not wonder that she may seem so after exertions such as these; as the Sybils of old after their inspired prophetic fury sank upon the ground, breathless and exhausted. But that any one can embody high thoughts and passions without having the prototypes in their own breast, is what I shall not believe upon hearsay, and what I am sure cannot be proved by argument.

It is a common complaint, that actors and actresses are dull when off the stage. I do not know that this is the case; but I own I should be surprised if it were otherwise. Many persons expect from the *éclat* with which they appear in certain characters to find them equally brilliant in company, not considering that the effect they produce in their artificial characters is the very circumstance that must disqualify them from producing any in

ordinary cases. They who have intoxicated and maddened multitudes by their public display of talent, can rarely be supposed to feel much stimulus in entertaining one or two friends, or in being the life of a dinner-party. She who perished over-night by the dagger or the bowl as Cassandra or Cleopatra, may be allowed to sip her tea in silence, and not to be herself again, till she revives in Aspasia. A tragic tone does not become familiar conversation, and any other must come very awkwardly and reluctantly from a great tragic actress. At least, in the intervals of her professional paroxysms, she will hardly set up for a verbal critic or *blue-stocking*. Comic actors again have their repartees put into their mouths, and must feel considerably at a loss when their cue is taken from them. The most sensible among them are modest and silent. It is only those of second-rate pretensions who think to make up for the want of original wit by practical jokes and *slang* phrases. *Theatrical* manners are, I think, the most repulsive of all others. Actors live on applause, and drag on a laborious artificial existence by the administration of perpetual provocatives to their sympathy with the public gratification —I will not call it altogether *vanity* in them who delight to make others laugh, any more than in us who delight to laugh with them. They have a significant phrase to express the absence of a proper sense in the audience—"there was not a hand in the house." I have heard one of the most modest and meritorious of them declare that if there was nobody else to applaud, he should like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that singers dislike to be encored. There is often a violent opposition out of compassion, with cries of "shame, shame!" when a young female debutante is about to be *encored* twice in a favorite air, as if it were taking a cruel advantage of her—instead of the third, she would be glad to sing it for the thirtieth time, and "die of an *encore* in *operatic* pain!" The excitement of public applause becomes at last a painful habit, and either in indolent or over-active temperaments produces a corresponding craving after privacy and leisure. Mr. L—— a short time ago was in treaty for a snug little place near his friend Mr. M—— at Highgate, on which he had so set his heart, that when the bargain failed, he actually shed tears like a child. He has a

right to blubber like a school-boy whenever he pleases, who almost every night of his life makes hundreds of people laugh till they forget they are no longer school-boys. I hope, if this should prove a hard winter, he will again wrap himself up in flannel and *lamb's wool*, take to his fire-side, and read the English Novelists once more fairly through. Let him have these lying on his table, Hogarth's prints hung round the room, and with his own face to boot, I defy the world to match them again! There is something very amiable and praiseworthy in the friendships of the two ingenious actors I have just alluded to: from the example of contrast and disinterestedness it affords, it puts me in mind of that of Rosinante and Dapple. These Arcadian retirements and ornamented retreats are, I suspect, tantalizing and unsatisfactory resources to the favorites of the town. The constant fever of applause, and of anxiety to deserve it, which produces the wish for repose, disables them from enjoying it. Let the *calenture* be as strong as it will, the eye of the pit is upon them in the midst of it: the smile of the boxes, the roar of the gallery, pierces through their holly-hedges, and overthrows all their pastoral theories. Of the public as of the sex it may be said, when one has once been a candidate for their favors,

"There is no living with them, nor without them!"

I wish the late Mr. Kemble had not written that stupid book about Richard III. and closed a proud theatrical career with a piece of literary foppery. Yet why do I wish it if it pleased him, since it made no alteration in my opinion respecting him? Its dry details, its little tortuous struggles after contradiction, nay, its fulsome praises of a kindred critic, Mr. Gifford (what will not a retired tragedian do for a niche in the *Quarterly Review?*), did not blot from my memory his stately form, his noble features, in which old Rome saw herself revived, his manly sense and plaintive tones, that were an echo to deep-fraught sentiment; nor make me forget another volume of poems published and suppressed long before, a volume addressed to Mrs. Inchbald, "the silver-voiced Anna." Both are dead. Such is the stuff of which our lives are made—bubbles that reflect the glorious features of the universe, and that glance a passing shadow, a feeble gleam, on those around them!

Mrs. Siddons was in the meridian of her reputation when I first became acquainted with the stage. She was an established veteran, when I was an unfledged novice; and, perhaps, played those scenes without emotion, which filled me and so many others with delight and awe. So far I had the advantage of her and of myself too. I did not then analyze her excellences as I should now or divide her merits into physical and intellectual advantages, or see that her majestic form rose up against misfortune in equal sublimity, an antagonist power to it—but the total impression (unquestioned, unrefined upon) overwhelmed and drowned me in a flood of tears. I was stunned and torpid after seeing her in any of her great parts. I was uneasy, and hardly myself, but I felt (more than ever) that human life was something very far from being indifferent, and I seemed to have got a key to unlock the springs of joy and sorrow in the human heart. This was no mean possession, and I availed myself of it with no sparing hand. The pleasure I anticipated at that time in witnessing her dullest performance, was certainly greater than I should have now in seeing her in the most brilliant. The very sight of her name in the play-bills in Tamerlane, or Alexander the Great, threw a light upon the day, and drew after it a long trail of Eastern glory, a joy and felicity unutterable, that has since vanished in the mists of criticism and the glitter of idle distinctions. I was in a trance, and my dreams were of mighty empires fallen, of vast burning zones, of waning time, of Persian thrones and them that sat on them, of sovereign beauty, and of victors vanquished by love. Death and Life played their pageant before me. The gates were unbarred, the folding doors of fancy were thrown open, and I saw all that mankind had been, or that I myself could conceive, pass in sudden and gorgeous review before me. No wonder that the huge, dim, disjointed vision should enchant and startle me. One reason why our first impressions are so strong and lasting is that they are *whole-length* ones. We afterwards divide and compare, and judge of things only as they differ from other things. At first we measure them from the ground, take in only the groups and masses, and are struck with the entire contrast to our former ignorance and inexperience. If we apprehend only a vague gaudy outline, this is not a disadvantage; for we fill it up with

our desires and fancies, which are most potent in their capacity to create good or evil. The first glow of passion in the breast throws its radiance over the opening path of life; and it is wonderful how much of the volume of our future existence the mere title-page discloses. The results do not indeed exactly correspond with our expectations; but our passions survive their first eager ebullition and bitter disappointment, the bulk of our sensations consists of broken vows and fading recollections; and it is not astonishing that there is so near a resemblance between our earliest anticipations and our latest sigh, since we obstinately believe things to be to the last, what we at first wished to find them.

"Hope travels through, nor quits us till we die."

Our existence is a tissue of passion, and our successive years only present us with fainter and fainter copies of the first proof-impressions. "The dregs of life," therefore, contain very little of force or spirit which

——"the first sprightly runnings could not give."

Imagination is, in this sense, sometimes truer than reality; for our passions being "compacted of imagination," and our desires whetted by impatience and delay, often lose some of their taste and essence with possession. So in youth we look forward to the advances of age, and feel them more strongly than when they arrive; nor is this more extraordinary than that from the height of a precipice the descent below should make us giddy, and that we should be less sensible of it when we come to the ground. Experience can teach us little, I suspect, after the first unfolding of our faculties, and the first strong excitement of outward objects. It can only add to or take away from our original impressions, and the imagination can make out the addition as largely or feel the privation as sharply as the senses. The little it can teach us, which is to moderate our chagrins and sober our expectations to the dull standard of reality, we will not learn. "Reason panders will;" and if we have been disappointed forty times, we are only the more resolved that the forty-first time shall make up for all the rest, and our hope grows desperate as the chances

are against it. A man who is wary, is so naturally; he who is of a sanguine and credulous disposition, will continue so in spite of warning; we hearken to no voice but that of our secret inclinations and native bias. Mr. Wordsworth being asked why he admired the sleep of infancy, said he thought "there was a grandeur in it;" the reason of which is partly owing to the contrast of total unconsciousness to all the ills of life, and partly that it is the germ implying all the future good; an untouched, untold treasure. In the outset of life, all that is to come of it seems to press with double force upon the heart, and our yearnings after good and dread of evil are in proportion to the little we have known of either. The first ebullitions of hope and fear in the human heart lift us to heaven, or sink us to the abyss; but when served out to us in driblets and palled by repetition, they lose their interest and effect. Or the dawn of experience, like that of day, shows the wide prospect stretched out before us, and dressed in its liveliest colors; as we proceed, we tire of the length of the way and complain of its sameness. The path of life is stripped of its freshness and beauty; and as we grow acquainted with them, we become indifferent to weal or wo.

The best part of our lives we pass in counting on what is to come; or in fancying what may have happened in real or fictitious story to others. I have had more pleasure in reading the adventures of a novel (and perhaps changing situations with the hero) than I ever had in my own. I do not think any one can feel much happier—a greater degree of heart's ease—than I used to feel in reading Tristam Shandy, and Peregrine Pickle, and Tom Jones, and the Tattler, and Gil Blas of Santillane, and Werter, and Boccacio. It was some years after that I read the last, but his tales

> "Dallied with the innocence of love,
> Like the old Time."

The story of Frederigo Alberigi affected me as if it had been my own case, and I saw his hawk upon her perch in the clear, cold air, "and how fat and fair a bird she was," as plain as ever I saw a picture of Titian's; and felt that I should have served her up as he did, as a banquet for his mistress, who came to visit him

at his own poor farm. I could wish that Lord Byron had employed himself while in Italy in rescuing such a writer as Boccacio from unmerited obloquy, instead of making those notable discoveries, that Pope was a poet, and that Shakspeare was not one! Mrs. Inchbald was always a great favorite with me. There is the true soul of woman breathing from what she writes, as much as if you heard her voice. It is as if Venus had written books. I first read her *Simple Story* (of all places in the world) at M———. No matter where it was; for it transported me out of myself. I recollect walking out to escape from one of the tenderest parts, in order to return to it again with double relish. An old crazy hand-organ was playing Robin Adair, a summer-shower dropped manna on my head, and slaked my feverish thirst of happiness. Her heroine, Miss Milner, was at my side. My dream has since been verified:—how like it was to the reality! In truth, the reality itself was but a dream. Do I not still see that "simple movement of her finger" with which Madame Basil beckoned Jean Jacques to the seat at her feet, the heightened color that tinged her profile as she sat at her work netting, the bunch of flowers in her hair? Is not the glow of youth and beauty in her cheek blended with the blushes of the roses in her hair? Do they not breathe the breath of love? And (what though the adventure was unfinished by either writer or reader) is not the blank filled up with the rare and subtle spirit of fancy, that imparts the fullness of delight to the air-drawn creations of brain? I once sat on a sunny bank in a field in which the green blades of corn waved in the fitful northern breeze, and read the letter in the *New Eloise*, in which St. Preux describes the Pays de Vaud. I never felt what Shakspeare calls my "glassy essence," so much as then. My thoughts were pure and free. They took a tone from the objects before me, and from the simple manners of the inhabitants of mountain-scenery, so well described in the letter. The style gave me the same sensation as the drops of morning dew before they are scorched by the sun; and I thought Julia did well to praise it. I wished I could have written such a letter. That wish, enhanced by my admiration of genius and the feeling of the objects around me, was accompanied with more pleasure than if I had written fifty such letters, or had gained all

the reputation of its immortal author! Of all the pictures, prints, or drawings I ever saw, none ever gave me such satisfaction as the rude etchings at the top of Rousseau's *Confessions*. There is a necromantic spell in the outlines. Imagination is a witch. It is not even said anywhere that such is the case, but I had got it in my head that the rude sketches of old-fashioned houses, stone-walls, and stumps of trees, represented the scenes at Annecy and Vevay, where he who relished all more sharply than others, and by his own intense aspirations after good had nearly delivered mankind from the yoke of evil, first drew the breath of hope. Here love's golden rigol bound his brows, and here fell from it. It was the partition-wall between life and death to him, and all beyond it was a desert! . . . . . .

"And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail."

I used to apply this line to the distant range of hills in a paltry landscape, which however had a tender vernal tone and a dewy freshness. I could look at them till my eyes filled with tears, and my heart dissolved in faintness. Why do I recal the circumstance after a lapse of years with so much interest? Because I felt it then. Those feeble outlines were linked in my mind to the purest, fondest yearnings after good, that dim, airy space contained my little all of hope, buoyed up by charming fears; the delight with which I dwelt upon it, enhanced by my ignorance of what was in store for me, was free from mortal grossness, familiarity or disappointment, and I drank pleasure out of the bosom of the silent hills and gleaming valleys as from a cup filled to the brim with love-philtres and poisonous sweetness by the sorceress, Fancy!

Mr. Opie used to consider it as an error to suppose that an artist's first works were necessarily crude and raw, and that he went on regularly improving on them afterwards. On the contrary, he maintained that they had the advantage of being done "with all his heart, and soul, and might;" that they contained his best thoughts, those which his genius most eagerly prompted, and which he had matured and treasured up longest, from the first dawn of art and nature on his mind; and that his subsequent works were rather after-thoughts, and the leavings and *make-*

shifts of his invention. There is a great deal of truth in this view of the matter. *Poeta nascitur, non fit;* that is, it is the strong character and impulse of the mind that forces out its way and stamps itself upon outward objects, not that is elicited and laboriously raised into artificial importance by contrivance and study. An *improving* actor, artist, or poet never becomes a great one. I have known such in my time, who were always advancing by slow and sure steps to the height of their profession; but in the mean time, some man of genius rose, and passing them, at once seized on the topmost round of ambition's ladder, so that they still remained in the second class. A volcano does not give warning when it will break out, nor a thunder-bolt send word of its approach. Mr. Kean stamped himself the first night in Shylock; he never did any better. Mr. Kemble is the only great and truly impressive actor I remember, who rose to his stately height by the interposition of art and gradations of merit. A man of genius is *sui generis*—to be known, he need only to be seen—you can no more dispute whether he is one, than you can dispute whether it is a panther that is shown you in a cage. Mrs. Siddons did not succeed the first time she appeared on the London boards, but then it was in Garrick's time, who sent her back to the country. He startled and put her out in some part she had to play with him, by the amazing vividness and intrepidity of his style of acting. Yet old Dr. Chauncey who frequented Sir Joshua Reynolds's, said that he was not himself in his latter days, that he got to play harlequin's tricks, and was too much in the trammels of the stage, and was quite different from what he was when he came out at Goodman's-Fields, when he surprised the town in Richard, as if he had dropped from the clouds, and his acting was all fire and air. Mrs. Siddons was hardly satisfied with the admiration of those who had only seen her latter performances, which were distinguished chiefly by their towering height and marble outline. She has been heard to exclaim, "You have seen me only in Lady Macbeth and Queen Katherine, and Belvidera and Jane Shore—you should have seen me when I played these characters alternately with Juliet, and Desdemona, and Calista, and the Mourning Bride, night after night, when I first came from Bath!" If she indeed filled these parts with a

beauty and tenderness equal to the sublimity of her other performances, one had only to see her in them and die! Lord Byron says, that Lady Macbeth died when Mrs. Siddons left the stage. Could not even her acting help him to understand Shakspeare?—Sir Joshua Reynolds at a late period saw some portraits he had done in early life, and lamented the little progress he had made. Yet he belonged to the laborious and *climbing* class. No one generation improves much upon another; no one individual improves much upon himself. What we impart to others we have within us, and we have it almost from the first. The strongest insight we obtain into nature is that which we receive from the broad light thrown upon it by the sudden development of our own faculties and feelings.

Even in science the greatest discoveries have been made at an early age. Sir Isaac Newton was not twenty when he saw the apple fall to the ground. Harvey, I believe, discovered the circulation of the blood at eighteen. Berkeley was only six and twenty when he published his Essay on Vision. Hartley's great principle was developed in an inaugural dissertation at College. Hume wrote his Treatise on Human Nature while he was yet quite a young man. Hobbes put forth his metaphysical system very soon after he quitted the service of Lord Bacon. I believe also that Galileo, Leibnitz, and Euler, commenced their career of discovery quite young; and I think it is only then, before the mind becomes set in its own opinions or the dogmas of others, that it can have vigor or elasticity to throw off the load of prejudice and seize on new and extensive combinations of things. In exploring new and doubtful tracts of speculation, the mind strikes out true and original views; as a drop of water hesitates at first what direction it shall take, but afterwards follows its own course. The very oscillation of the mind in its first perilous and staggering search after truth, brings together extreme arguments and illustrations, that would never occur in a more settled and methodised state of opinion, and felicitous suggestions turn up when we are trying experiments on the understanding, of which we can have no hope when we have once made up our minds to a conclusion, and only go over the previous steps that led to it. So that the greater number of opinions we have formed, we are less capable of form-

ing new ones, and slide into common-places, according as we have them at hand to resort to. It is easier taking the beaten path than making our way over bogs and precipices. The great difficulty in philosophy is to come to every question with a mind fresh and unshackled by former theories, though strengthened by exercise and information; as in the practice of art, the great thing is to retain our admiration of the beautiful in nature, together with the power to imitate it, and not, from a want of this original feeling, to be enslaved by formal rules, or dazzled by the mere difficulties of execution. Habit is necessary to give power: but with the stimulus of novelty, the love of truth and nature ceases through indolence or insensibility. Hence wisdom too commonly degenerates into prejudice; and skill into pedantry. Ask a metaphysician what subject he understands best; and he will tell you that which he knows the least about. Ask a musician to play a favorite tune, and he will select an air the most difficult of execution. If you ask an artist his opinion of a picture, he will point to some defect in perspective or anatomy. If an opera-dancer wishes to impress you with an idea of his grace and accomplishments, he will throw himself into the most distorted attitude possible. Who would not rather see a dance in the forest of Montmorenci on a summer's evening by a hundred laughing peasant-girls and their partners, who come to this scene for several miles round, rushing through the forest-glades, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, than all the *pirouettes*, *pied-à-plombs*, and *entrechats*, performed at the French Opera by the whole *corps de ballet?* Yet the first only just contrive to exert their heels, and not put their partners out, whilst the last perform nothing but feats of dexterity and miracles of skill—not one of which they could ever have performed, if they had not lost every idea of natural grace, ease, or decorum in habitual callousness or professional vanity, or had one feeling left which prompts their rustic rivals to run through the mazes of the dance

"With heedless haste and giddy cunning,"

while the leaves tremble to the festive sounds of music, and the air circles in gladder currents to their joyous movements!—There was a dance in the pantomime at Covent-Garden two years

ago, which I could have gone to see every night. I *did* go to see it every night that I could make an excuse for that purpose. It was nothing; it was childish. Yet I could not keep away from it. Some young people came out of a large twelfth-cake, dressed in full court costume, and danced a quadrille, and then a minuet, to some divine air. Was it that it put me in mind of my school-boy days, and of the large bunch of lilac that I used to send as a present to my partner? Or of times still longer past, the court of Louis XIV., the Duke de Nemours and the Princess of Cleves? Or of the time when she who was all grace moved in measured steps before me, and wafted me into Elysium? I know not how it was; but it came over the sense with a power not to be resisted,

> "Like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor."

I mention these things to show, as I think, that pleasures are not

> "Like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, the bloom is shed,
> Or like the snow-falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever;
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
> Evanishing amid the storm."

On the contrary, I think they leave traces of themselves behind them, durable and delightful even in proportion to the regrets accompanying them, and which we relinquish only with our being. The most irreconcilable disappointments are perhaps those which arise from our obtaining all we wish.

The Opera-figurante despises the peasant-girl that dances on the green, however much happier she may be or may be thought by the first. The one can do what the other cannot. Pride is founded not on the sense of happiness, but on the sense of power; and this is one great source of self-congratulation, if not of self-satisfaction. This, however, is continually increasing, or at least renewing with our advances in skill and the conquest of difficulties; and, accordingly, there is no end of it while we live or till our faculties decay.

He who undertakes to master any art or science has cut himself out work enough to last the rest of his life, and may promise himself all the enjoyment that is to be found in looking down with self-complacent triumph on the inferiority of others, or all the torment that there is in envying their success. There is no danger that the machine will ever stand still afterwards. Mandeville has endeavored to show that if it were not for envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, mankind would perish of pure chagrin and *ennui;* and I am not in the humor to contradict him.—The same spirit of emulation that urges us on to surpass others, supplies us with a new source of satisfaction (of something which is at least the reverse of indifference and apathy) in the indefatigable exertion of our faculties and the perception of new and minor shades of distinction. These, if not so delightful, are more subtle, and may be multiplied indefinitely. They borrow something of taste and pleasure from their first origin, till they dwindle away into mere abstractions. The exercise, whether of our minds or bodies, sharpens and gives additional alacrity to our active impressions as the indulgence of our sensibility, whether to pleasure or pain, blunts our passive ones. The will to do, the power to think, is a progressive faculty, though not the capacity to feel. Otherwise, the business of life could not go on. If it were necessity alone that oiled the springs of society, people would grow tired and restive, they would lie down and die. But with use there comes a habit, a positive need of something to keep off the horror of vacancy. The sense of power has a sense of pleasure annexed to it, or what is practically tantamount, an impulse, an endeavor, that carries us through the most tiresome drudgery or the hardest tasks. Indolence is a part of our nature too. There is a *vis inertiæ* at first, a difficulty in beginning or in leaving off. I have spun out this Essay in a good measure from the dread I feel of entering upon new subjects.—Some such reasoning is necessary to account for the headstrong and incorrigible violence of the passions when the will is once implicated. So in ambition, in avarice, in the love of gaming and of drinking (where the strong stimulus is the chief excitement), there is no hope of any termination, of any pause or relaxation; but we are hurried forward as by a fever, when all sense of pleasure is dead, and we only

persevere as it were out of contradiction, and in defiance of the obstacles, the mortifications and privations we have to encounter. The resistance of the will to outward circumstances, its determination to create its own good or evil, is also a part of the same constitution of the mind. The solitary captive can make a companion of the spider that straggles into his cell, or find amusement in counting the nails in his dungeon-door; while the proud lord that placed him there feels the depth of solitude in crowded ball-rooms and hot theatres, and turns with weariness from the scenes of luxury and dissipation. Defoe's romance is the finest possible exemplification of the manner in which our internal resources increase with our external wants.

Our affections are enlarged and unfolded with time and acquaintance. If we like new books, new faces, new scenes, or *hanker* after those we have never seen, we also like old books, old faces, old haunts,

> "Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness have grown."

If we are repelled after a while by familiarity, or when the first gloss of novelty wears off, we are brought back from time to time by recurring recollections, and are at last wedded to them by a thousand associations. Passion is the undue irritation of the will from indulgence or opposition: imagination is the anticipation of unknown good: affection is the attachment we form to any object from its being connected with the habitual impression of numberless sources and ramifications of pleasure. The heart is the most central of all things. Our duties also (in which either our affections or our understandings are our teachers) are uniform, and must find us at our posts. If this is ever difficult at first, it is always easy in the end. The last pleasure in life is the sense of discharging our duty.

Our physical pleasures (unless as they depend on imagination and opinion) undergo less alteration, and are even more lasting than any others. They return with returning appetite, and are as good as new. We do not read the same book twice two days following, but we had rather eat the same dinner two days following than go without one. Our intellectual pleasures, which are

spread out over a larger surface, are variable for that very reason, that they tire by repetition, and are diminished in comparison.* Our physical ones have but one condition for their duration and sincerity, *viz.* that they shall be unforced and natural. Our passions of a grosser kind wear out before our senses; but in ordinary cases they grow indolent and conform to habit, instead of becoming impatient or inordinate from a desire of change, as we are satisfied with more moderate bodily exercise in age or middle life than we are in youth. Upon the whole, there are many things to prop up and reinforce our fondness for existence, after the intoxication of our first acquaintance with it is over; health, a walk and the appetite it creates, a book, the doing a good-natured or friendly action, are satisfactions that hold out to the last; and with these, and any others to aid us that fall harmlessly in our way, we may make a shift for a few seasons, after having exhausted the short-lived transports of an eager and enthusiastic imagination, and without being under the necessity of hanging or drowning ourselves as soon as we come to years of discretion.

* I remember Mr. Wordsworth saying, that he thought we had pleasanter days in the outset of life, but that our years slid on pretty even one with another, as we gained in variety and richness what we lost in intensity. This balance of pleasure can however only be hoped for by those who retain the best feelings of their early youth, and sometimes deign to look out of their own minds into those of others: for without this we shall grow weary of the continual contemplation of self, particularly as that self will be a very shabby one.

THE END.

D. 1.

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